There are few men who have accepted Spinoza's system in its entirety. But Hegel is not the only one to have thought that in order to become a philosopher one should first soak oneself in Spinoza. It is for the would-be philosopher that this book was written.

The book opens with a brief account of Spinoza's life and character, a survey of his works, and a review of his general outlook. The remainder offers an exposition and estimate of his philosophy while retaining as far as possible his own words. The central thought has been developed in quotations drawn from the whole compass of his writings, while the criticisms which have been introduced are mainly those which were made in his own lifetime and to which replies can be found in his own works. It is true of most great thinkers, and especially true of Spinoza, that they are themselves their best interpreters.

Professor Roth's book was first published in 1929 and has been out of print for some years.

JAN 11 '56

SPINOZA

By the same author

SPINOZA, DESCARTES AND MAIMONIDES
Clarendon Press, 1924

CORRESPONDENCE OF DESCARTES AND CONSTANTYN HUYGENS
Clarendon Press, 1926

THE SCIENCE OF MORALS
Benn, 1928

DESCARTES' DISCOURSE ON METHOD
Clarendon Press 1937, 1948

THE GUIDE FOR THE PERPLEXED: MOSES MAIMONIDES
Hutchinson, 1948

GOD AND MAN IN THE OLD TESTAMENT
Allen & Unwin, 1954

SPINOZA

BY

LEON ROTH

M.A., D.PHIL., F.B.A.

GEORGE ALLEN & UNWIN LTD

RUSKIN HOUSE · MUSEUM STREET · LONDON

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TO THE MEMORY OF
SAMUEL ALEXANDER, O.M.

'Erravit cum Spinoza'

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NOTE TO THE RE-ISSUE OF 1954

In this re-issue the book has been left as it was, not because it could not be better but because the author could not make it so.

It is encouraging to see some signs of a revival of interest in the classical philosophers. Recent thinkers have been pre-occupied with the analysis of ordinary language as used by ordinary men. But experience has shown that ordinary language expresses only ordinary thoughts ; and the determination of what the ordinary man means has often suggested that he would do better to mean something else.

Here the classical philosphers have their use. They were not ordinary men and the language they used was often, regrettably, not ordinary. But it would seem that they had something to say. They were men of ideas, and their ideas enlarge and enrich our understanding. They are suggestive. They are adequate to the widest situations. They help bind together fragments of experience. They raise, and offer fresh approaches to, the primary questions of life which beset mankind in every generation.

There are, and have been, few Spinozists, men who accept Spinoza's system in its entirety. But Hegel is not the only one to have thought that in order to become a philosopher one should first soak oneself in Spinoza. It is the would-be philosopher for whom this book was originally written and is now, after a quarter of a century, re-issued.

The major works of Spinozistic interpretation are indicated in the Bibliographical Note (p. 239 ff.). To these should be added, among others, H. F. Hallet : *Aeternitas, A Spinozistic Essay* (Clarendon Press, 1930) : H. H. Joachim : *Spinoza's Tractatus De Intellectus Emendatione, A Commentary* (Clarendon Press, 1940); H. A. Wolfson : *The Philosophy of Spinoza* (Harvard University Press, 1934) ; and on a special topic of importance on which previous opinion should be revised, Georges Friedmann: *Leibniz et Spinoza* (Gallimard, 1946). Of recent introductions attention may be drawn to the charming *Spinoza* of the late E. Chartier ("Alain"), (Editions Mellottée, Paris, 1949); Mr. Stuart Hampshire's *Spinoza* in the Pelican Philosophers series (1951) ; and Miss R. L. Saw's *Vindication of Metaphysics, A Study in the Philosophy of Spinoza* (Macmillan, 1951).

Cambridge, 1953 L.R.

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PREFACE

THE plan of this book is explained in the Introduction. It is intended as a help to, not as a substitute for, the reading of Spinoza, and does not therefore profess to offer a discussion of every point.

The versions given are based on the already existing translations, but have been revised and in part re-written.

The book has gained much from the criticism and suggestions of Prof. S. Alexander, Dr. Carl Gebhardt, Mr. F. W. Halliday, Prof. H. H. Joachim, and the Editor of the series of which it forms a part, Prof. J. L. Stocks. The author offers them all his sincerest thanks.

MANCHESTER,
September 1928.

INTRODUCTION

When George Eliot was engaged on her translation of Spinoza (unfortunately it was never published), she wrote to her friend, Charles Bray (December 1849): "What is wanted in English is not a translation of Spinoza's works, but a true estimate of his life and system. After one has rendered his Latin faithfully into English, one feels that there is another yet more difficult process of translation for the reader to effect, and that the only mode of making Spinoza accessible to a larger number is to study his books, then shut them and give an analysis. For those who read the very words Spinoza wrote there is the same sort of interest in his style as in the conversation of a person of great capacity who has led a solitary life and who says from his own soul what all the world is saying by rote; but this interest hardly belongs to a translation." The object of this volume, in accordance with the plan of the series of which it forms a part, is to offer an "estimate" of Spinoza while retaining, as far as is possible through translation, "the very words Spinoza wrote," and so to combine the two things which George Eliot thought essential for a thorough appreciation.

With this end in view every opportunity has been taken of listening to Spinoza himself. The central thought has been developed in quotations drawn from the whole compass of his writings, while the criticisms which have been introduced are mainly those which were made in his own lifetime and to which replies can be found in his own works. It is true of all great thinkers, and it is especially true of Spinoza, that they are their own best interpreters.

For a similar reason no attempt has been made to

utilise to the full the fresh material which has been accumulated on Spinoza's personal history. The fact is that in spite of the loving toil of a generation of scholars the additional knowledge is meagre. Yet we need not regret that we are left with the bare outlines of the old picture. Their very plainness is a fitting introduction. Spinoza himself would seem to have been of the opinion of Plato that our interest should lie in themes, not in persons; but if we cannot rise to such a height we can at least say with his friends and first editors that his manner of life can be studied best in his work—*quam vitæ inierit rationem satis superque ex his scriptis manifesta est.*

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A.—Chron. Spin.=*Chronicon Spinozanum*, the annual publication of the Societas Spinozana (The Hague, 1921 ff.).

Lg.=*Die Lebensgeschichte Spinozas* (Leipzig, 1899), the invaluable collection by J. Freudenthal of all the contemporary documents relating to Spinoza's life and writings.

B.—Spinoza's Works (described below, Book I, cap. 2):—

C.M.=*Cogitata Metaphysica* (Metaphysical Thoughts).

D.I.E.=*De Intellectus Emendatione* (On the Improvement of the Understanding).

Ep.=*Epistolæ* (Letters).

Eth.=*Ethica* (Ethics).

K.V.=*Korte Verhandeling Van God de Mensch en deszelfs Welstand* (Short Treatise on God, Man and his Well-being).

Pol.=*Tractatus Politicus* (Political Treatise).

P.Ph.C.=*Renati des Cartes Principia Philosophiæ* (Principles of the Cartesian Philosophy).

Th.P.=*Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (Theological-Political Treatise).

All references are by books and chapters, or, in the case of the *Ethics*, by books and propositions. Special citations by page and line are to the pagination of the original editions, as conveniently registered by Dr. C. Gebhardt in the *inner* margin of the new Heidelberg edition

(below, p. 20 f.); except in the case of the *Letters*, where they are to Gebhardt's own pagination, and in that of the *Short Treatise*, where they are both to Gebhardt's text and to Wolf's English version, referred to as G. and W. respectively.

BOOK I

THE MAN AND HIS WORK

I

LIFE AND CHARACTER

SPINOZA remarks incidentally in the course of one of his discussions that if a person wishes to understand Euclidian geometry he need know nothing about the life and character of Euclid or the language he used, the public for whom he wrote, or the later history of his writings; "and what is said here of Euclid," he adds, "holds good of all those who have written about things which are clear in their own nature" (Th.P. c. 7, p. 97).[1] The remark is characteristic both of the age and of the man. The seventeenth century had little idea of the writing of history—it was perhaps too much occupied in the making of it; and the man was bent rather on the discovery of truth than on the self-display of the discoverer. He believed that he, too, had written of things which were "clear in their own nature," and that it was what he had written, not how he had written it, which was of importance for humanity; he was content, therefore, to be forgotten in his work, and asked expressly that it should be published anonymously. The modern age has little use for such austerity. We parade the intimacies of greatness on the public stage. Yet we can still at least admire the way in which Spinoza's own friends understood and respected the request:—

"The Author," we read in the editorial preface to his posthumous works, "received his early training in literature, and as a youth spent many years in the study of theology; but when he came to the age at which the

[1] For the abbreviations and method of reference *see* above, p. xv.

mind is maturing he gave himself up entirely to philosophy. He burned with the passion for knowledge; yet as he did not find what he required in either teachers or authors, he determined to make trial of his own powers, a purpose in the carrying out of which he received great assistance from the writings of Descartes.

"He freed himself from occupations of any kind and from the distractions of business. Then, in order not to be disturbed in his meditations by his friends, he left Amsterdam, the city in which he had been born and bred, and retired first to Rhynsburg, then to Voorburg, and finally to the Hague. There, on the 21st of February 1677, after he had completed his forty-fourth year, he died from phthisis.

"He was not only devoted to the pursuit of truth. He engaged himself also and especially in the study of Optics and in the turning and polishing of lenses for telescopes and microscopes. He gave sufficient proof of his powers in these activities, and more excellent things might have been hoped from him if he had not died before his time. Although he withdrew himself altogether from the world, he became known to a great many distinguished men of learning and position by reason of his solid erudition and great mental acumen. . . .

"Most of his time he spent in the investigation of the nature of things, in setting his discoveries in order, and in communicating them to his friends. He had little time for recreation. So strong was his passion for the pursuit of truth that, according to the testimony of those with whom he lived, he sometimes kept to the house for three whole months. Indeed, it was because he was anxious not to be disturbed in his investigations, but to follow them out in accordance with his own mind, that he modestly refused the Professorship in the University of Heidelberg which had been offered to him. . . .

"The name of the Author has been indicated on the

title-page and elsewhere only by initial letters [below, p. 17]. This is because he asked expressly, a short time before his death, that his name should not be prefixed to the *Ethics*, the printing of which he ordered. The reason for the prohibition would seem to be none other than that he did not wish his doctrine to be called after himself. . . ."

The unnamed subject of these brief sentences, the Dutch Jew, Baruch or Benedictus de Spinoza,[1] was born to Michael and Hannah Deborah de Spinoza on the 24th of November 1632 at Amsterdam. He received his education in the local Talmudical College and from private teachers. He became gradually estranged from the Synagogue, and at the age of twenty-four (in the year 1656) suffered the grand excommunication. He left Amsterdam and spent the remainder of his life in various quiet places, for the most part in the country. The cottage in which he lived at Rhynsburg (now a tram's ride from Leyden), identified and preserved by a Dutch society, still retains its atmosphere of peace. In 1670 he settled at the Hague, living first in the Stille Verkaade, afterwards in the house in the Pavilioensgracht which, purchased by an international committee in 1927 and formally dedicated to the furtherance of the study of his works, is now the Domus Spinozana. He earned his livelihood by the newly discovered art of grinding optical lenses, and it is generally supposed that the inhaling of the finely powdered glass exaggerated the hereditary pulmonary complaint from which in 1677 he died.

[1] Baruch is the Hebrew original, Benedictus the Latin translation; the Portuguese form would have been Bento. The exact form of the surname is uncertain. The surviving specimens of his signature offer the variants Spiñoza, d'Spinoza, de Spinoza, despinoza; official records of the family, Despinoza, Espinoza, Spinosa, Espinosa, de Espinosa, de Espinoza, Despinosa, d'Espinose, Spinoza; family gravestones, Espinoza, de Espinoza, de Espinosa, d'Espinoza, D Espinoza—the mother's inscription reads, *Hana Debora d'Espinoza mulher D Mikael d'Espinoza* (Lg. p. 111).

This is the bare outline of a life which was singularly uneventful, so far at least as external happenings are concerned. Research has added little to the information contained in the early Lives, themselves based largely on the account contained in the editorial preface to the *Opera Posthuma*; it has suggested, indeed, that much of that information is of little critical value. The Life ascribed to Lucas, now available in a fresh text and an English version from Prof. A. Wolf,[1] is on some points demonstrably wrong, and is in any case slight and of apologetic tendency. The more famous one of Colerus,[2] a Lutheran clergyman who came to the Hague in 1693 and had his interest aroused in Spinoza by the fact that he lived in rooms which had once been Spinoza's, is based on reminiscences twenty years old. They both bear witness to the striking impression produced by Spinoza's personality, yet leave the detail of fact, even if accepted in its entirety, incomplete. The picture has been filled out to some extent by subsidiary information drawn from many sources, now assembled in the invaluable work of Freudenthal, *Die Lebensgeschichte Spinozas* (Leipzig, 1899). We have descriptions of the school in which Spinoza was educated. The curriculum was confined to Hebrew and Rabbinic learning (taught through the medium of Spanish), although it is interesting to note that it was treated in such a way as to include Rhetoric and the writing of verses, and was supplemented by regular study of other subjects at home under private teachers. We can guess why Spinoza settled in Rhynsburg. It was the head-quarters of the 'nonconformist' sect of Collegiants, which apart from various points of doctrine claimed the 'liberty of prophesying' and repudiated set services. We have particularly valuable testimony to the nature of

[1] *The Oldest Biography of Spinoza*, London, Allen & Unwin, 1927.

[2] Reprinted in full (from the old English version) by Sir Frederick Pollock as an appendix to his *Spinoza* (1880; 2nd edition, 1899; re-issued with corrections, London, Duckworth, 1912).

his interests in the inventory of books sold among his effects after his death. The curious can now handle replicas of the volumes in the Spinozahuis at Rhynsburg, where the library has been reconstructed through the munificence of Baron Rosenthal. Contemporary official documents reveal the extent of the scandal which his views aroused, while travellers' memoirs testify to his European reputation. The lives of his associates and friends have been systematically traced out—Van den Ende, a somewhat doubtful character in whose school Spinoza learned, and afterwards for a short time taught, Latin; Lodewijk Meyer, a physician with interests in literature and the arts as well as in the sciences, who first stimulated Spinoza to publication; Pieter Balling, a merchant, who in his *Light of the Candlestick*, now reproduced in *Chron. Spin.* IV, gave expression to the simple and somewhat mystic piety of the Rhynsburgians which is so like Spinoza's own; Jarigh Jelles, the principal editor of Spinoza's literary remains, and Jan Hendrikszen Glazemaker, their translator into Dutch. All these and kindred points are subjects for detailed study and must be followed up in special books and memoirs. Yet behind the problem as a whole there loom two broad factors which cannot be passed over even in so brief an introductory sketch as this, because they go far to explain Spinoza's inner life and mental outlook. These two factors are those of personal antecedents and contemporary history.

Spinoza came from a family of Marranos. Marrano (a word said to mean 'pig')[1] was the name given to the descendants of those many thousands of Jews in Spain and Portugal who, though forcibly baptized into the Catholic faith and so nominally Christians, yet adhered to their ancestral religion in secret. Hunted down by

[1] So Farinelli in *Biblioteca dell' Archivum Romanicum*, Serie II: Linguistica, vol. 10 (Geneva, 1925).

the Inquisition, they sought a refuge outside the Peninsula, and from 1593 began to flock in large numbers to the Netherlands. Men of the highest education and breeding —and there were poets, artists and playwrights among them as well as merchants, administrators and physicians —they formed a strange and separate element in the streets of Amsterdam. They brought with them the ways and looks of the country from which they had fled, and they handed these on, together with its language as their mother-tongue, to their Dutch-born descendants. Spinoza himself is described by those who knew him personally as having the typical features and complexion of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews. He was noticeable, too, so Colerus tells us, for his "civil and handsome behaviour," while Lucas remarks that "his breeding was more like that of the Court than of a commercial city." But he received from his ancestry much more than physical feature and charm of manner. The Marranos had carried on a struggle against Spanish bigotry even more heroic than that of the Dutch themselves, and in the conflict they had developed an unsurpassed fortitude and strength of character. With every boat there came fresh refugees, and with them further tales of heroism; and we have Spinoza's own testimony that the impression made by them on his mind remained with him till the end. Long after he had left the Synagogue, in his very last years, he was urged by a former pupil, Albert Burgh, to consider the numerous martyrs who had testified to the truth of Catholic doctrine and to seek salvation in the Church. He retorted (one wonders if with pride): "They [the Jews] claim that they count far more martyrs than any other nation, and that they increase every day the number of those who with singular steadfastness have suffered for the faith which they profess; and with justice. For I myself know among others of a certain Judah, surnamed the Believer, who in

the midst of the flames, when he was already thought to be dead, began to sing the psalm, *To Thee, O God, I commit my Soul*, and as he sang, expired" (Ep. 76, pp. 321-2). When this *Juda el Creyente*, known to history as Don Lope de Vera y Alarcon, was burned at Valladolid, Spinoza was only twelve years old.

If Spinoza's character owed much to the circumstance of his ancestry, his keen interest in affairs could not but have been stirred by the country and period in which he lived. The Holland of the seventeenth century was of singular moment, both politically and intellectually. Just freed by its own efforts from the yoke of Spain, it had symbolised its triumph by the opening of great schools of learning and by the developing of a universal carrying trade. Its reward is to be read in the long roll of the illustrious seekers after truth and peace who from Descartes to Locke took refuge on its shores. Yet even by the side of these it has cause for pride in the artists, scientists, philologists and statesmen whom it produced of its own.

That in seventeenth-century Holland Spinoza should have felt himself a citizen of the world is not, then, a matter for surprise. What is notable is that, although he was without advantages of birth or wealth, he should have enjoyed the confidence of some of the world's great men. He is said to have associated with and been honoured by the statesmen Jan and Cornelis De Witt. He was a friend of Hudde, a leading figure both in the municipal and intellectual life of Amsterdam. He was visited and esteemed by the physicist Christiaan Huygens and the philologist Isaac Voss. He was summoned to a meeting with Prince Condé, and was invited to receive a pension from Louis XIV. He was sought after by Leibniz, who made notes of his conversation and borrowed the manuscript of his unpublished work. He was in constant communication with

Oldenburg, the secretary of the newly founded Royal Society in England, and through him with the 'sceptical chymist,' the Honourable Robert Boyle. Nor was academic recognition wanting. He was offered (but refused) the Chair of Philosophy at the University of Heidelberg (Epp. 47-8). His "solid knowledge, combined with his courtesy and elegance of manner—rich products," the writer (Oldenburg) adds, "both of nature and of industry—contained in themselves a charm which compelled the affection of men of generous mind and liberal education" (Ep. 1; and *cf.* Lg. p. 237, ll. 24–6). Spinoza himself remarks that his friends hardly left him master in his own house; while if we are to believe Lucas we must think of him in his later years as one of the 'sights' of the Hague.

He not only had friends at home and correspondents and visitors from abroad. From the first he attracted disciples. His earliest attempt to set down his thoughts was for the benefit of younger students (below, p. 28 f.), while a group centring round an enthusiast of the name of De Vries met regularly at Amsterdam to discuss the manuscript of his maturer philosophy. "It is arranged in this wise. One of us (each in turn) reads through the whole and explains it in his own way. Then he demonstrates it according to the regular series and order of your propositions. If by chance we do not satisfy one another then, we think it worth while to note the difficulties down and write to you so that you should, if possible, clear them up for us" (Ep. 8, p. 39). An interesting picture, finished, after the putting of a number of shrewd questions, by some items of news concerning the writer's progress in studies which he had undertaken under the master's direction.

Spinoza, then, was no recluse. He knew and valued society. He took a keen and informed interest in affairs, and was known among public men for his skill in predicting

political events. His conversation was that of a man of the world—simple and persuasive, we are told, but without affectation and full of good sense. He well understood that recreation is essential to life—" good food and drink," as he says in the *Ethics* (IV, 45 sch. 2), " the enjoyment of the beauty of growing plants, the hearing of music, visits to the theatre." He was an accomplished draughtsman as well as a skilled optician, and left at his death a portfolio full of sketches which he had drawn for his own pleasure. A most striking light on his personality, which has been over-simplified, is thrown by the fact that he once drew himself as Masaniello, a well-known Italian republican and revolutionary. Nor was he devoid of literary interests. His library was as rich in *belles lettres* (Spanish, however, not Dutch) as it was poor in philosophy. Contemporary documents show that he had many admirers and followers outside the small circle in which he lived, and apart from the wide and distinguished circle in which he was known. Yet we are told by his biographer, in paragraphs which have become famous, that of his own free choice he lived in the most modest and retired fashion possible :—

" It is scarce credible how sober and frugal he was all the time. Not that he was reduced to so great a Poverty, as not to be able to spend more, if he had been willing ; he had Friends enough, who offered him their Purses, and all manner of assistance. But he was naturally very sober, and could be satisfied with little ; and he did not care that People shou'd think that he had lived, even but once, at the expense of other Men. What I say about his Sobriety and good Husbandry may be prov'd by several small Reckonings, which have been found amongst his Papers after his death. It appears by them that he lived a whole day upon a Milk-soop done with Butter, which amounted to three pence, and upon a Pot of Beer of three half pence. Another day he eat nothing but Gruel done

with Raisins and Butter, and that Dish cost him fourpence halfpenny. There are but two half pints of Wine at most for one Month to be found amongst those Reckonings, and tho' he was often invited to eat with his Friends, he chose rather to live upon what he had at home, tho' it were never so little, than to sit down at a good Table at the expence of another Man.

" Thus he spent the remaining part of his Life in the House of his last Landlord, which was somewhat above five years and a half. He was very careful to cast up his Accounts every Quarter; which he did, that he might spend neither more nor less than what he could spend every year. And he would say sometimes to the people of the House, that he was like the Serpent, who forms a Circle with his Tail in his Mouth; to denote that he had nothing left at the year's end. He added, that he design'd to lay up no more Money than what would be necessary for him to have a decent Burying; and that, as his Parents had left him nothing, so his Heirs and Relations should not expect to get much by his Death. . . .

" If he was very frugal in his way of living, his Conversation was also very sweet and easy. He knew admirably well how to be master of his Passions: He was never seen very melancholy, nor very merry. He had the command of his Anger, and if at any time he was uneasy in his mind, it did not appear outwardly; or if he happen'd to express his grief by some gestures, or by some words, he never fail'd to retire immediately, for fear of doing an unbecoming thing. He was, besides, very courteous and obliging. He would very often discourse with his Landlady, especially when she lay in, and with the people of the House, when they happened to be sick or afflicted; he never fail'd then to comfort 'em, and exhort them to bear with patience those Evils, which God assigned to them as a Lot. He put the Children in mind of going often to Church, and taught them to be obedient

and dutiful to their Parents. When the people of the House came from Church, he wou'd often ask them what they had learn'd, and what they could remember of the Sermon. He had a great esteem for Dr. Cordes, my Predecessor; who was a learned and good-natured Man, and of an exemplary Life, which gave occasion to Spinosa to praise him very often. Nay, he went sometimes to hear him preach, and he esteem'd particularly his learned way of explaining the Scripture, and the solid applications he made of it. He advised at the same time his Landlord and the People of the House, not to miss any Sermon of so excellent a Preacher.

" It happen'd one day, that his Landlady ask'd him whether he believed she cou'd be saved in the Religion she profest: He answered, *Your religion is a good one; you need not look for another, nor doubt that you may be saved in it, provided, whilst you apply your self to Piety, you live at the same time a peaceable and quiet life.*

" When he staid at home he was troublesome to no Body; he spent the greatest part of his time quietly in his own Chamber. When he happen'd to be tired by having applyed himself too much to his Philosophical Meditations, he went down Stairs to refresh himself, and discoursed with the people of the House about any thing, that might afford Matter for an ordinary Conversation, and even about trifles. He also took Pleasure in smoaking a Pipe of Tobacco; or, when he had a mind to divert himself somewhat longer, he look'd for some Spiders, and made 'em fight together, or he threw some Flies into the Cobweb, and was so well pleased with that Battel, that he would sometimes break into Laughter. He observed, also, with a Microscope, the different parts of the smallest Insects, from whence he drew such Consequences as seem'd to him to agree best with his Discoveries.

" He was no lover of Money, as I have said, and he was very well contented to live from Hand to Mouth. Simon

de Vries, of Amsterdam, who expresses a great love for him, presented him one day with a summ of two thousand Florins, to enable him to live a more easie Life; but Spinosa, in the presence of his Landlord, desired to be excused from accepting that Money, under pretence that he wanted nothing, and that if he received so much Money, it wou'd infallibly divert him from his Studies and Occupations.

"The same Simon de Vries being like to die, and having no Wife nor children, design'd to make him his general Heir; but Spinosa wou'd never consent to it, and told him, that he shou'd not think to leave his Estate to any Body but to his brother, who lived at Schiedam, seeing he was his nearest Relation, and natural Heir. This was executed, as he proposed it; but it was upon condition, that the Brother and Heir of Simon de Vries shou'd pay to Spinosa a sufficient Annuity for his maintenance; and that Clause was likewise faithfully executed. But that which is particular, is, that an Annuity of 500 Florins was offered to Spinosa by virtue of that Clause, which he would not accept, because he found it too considerable, so that he reduc'd it to 300 Florins. That Annuity was regularly paid him during his Life. . . .

"Another instance of the Uninterestedness of Spinosa, is what past after the death of his Father. His Father's Succession was to be divided between him and his Sisters, to which they were condemned in Law, tho' they had left no Stone unturn'd to exclude him from it. Yet instead of dividing that Succession, he gave them his share, and kept only for himself a good Bed, with its furniture. . . ."

Colerus, from whose biography the preceding paragraphs are quoted, was certainly no admirer of Spinoza's work. In his opinion it is "an abominable production," "nothing but lies and blasphemies," "the most pernicious Atheism that ever was seen in the world"; and he quotes with evident approval the judgment of a

contemporary that "one may very well doubt whether amongst the many men whom the devil has hired to overthrow all human and divine right any of them has been more busy than that impostor who was born to the great mischief of Church and State." Yet it is the personal gossip about Spinoza which Colerus himself collected to which is largely due the admiration in which he is held as a man. His story has passed into a legend; his life is held up as that of a saint. The German romanticists wrote of him as "a holy outcast," the "God-intoxicated man"; while Renan said of the house in the Pavilioensgracht that it was "perhaps from there that God had been seen most near." All this is as it may be. But it is good to know that the peasants of the villages which Spinoza lived remembered his kindliness and affability; and that, when his barber brought in after his death his quarterly bill for shaving, it was seen, to the great subsequent scandal of Colerus, to be made out to "Mr. Spinosa *of blessed memory*."

II

WORKS

SPINOZA published only two books in his lifetime, one in his own name and one anonymously.

The book he published in his own name is his account of the *Principles of Descartes' Philosophy* (*Renati des Cartes Principia Philosophiæ*, referred to here in the notes as P.Ph.C.), together with an appendix containing some *Metaphysical Thoughts* (*Cogitata Metaphysica*=C.M.). The work, which appeared in Amsterdam in 1663, is preceded by a long and important preface (below, pp. 36 and 228) from a friend of Spinoza's, the physician L. Meyer.

The volume published anonymously was the *Theological-Political Treatise* (*Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*=Th.P.). This was published at Amsterdam in 1670, but for reasons of prudence which will be explained later it was given a false imprint, the title-page reading *Hamburgi apud Henricum Kunraht* (=published at Hamburg by Heinrich Kunraht).

After Spinoza's death his friends produced his literary remains in one volume under the title of *Opera Posthuma*. This appeared in 1677, without the name and place of the publisher, and under the initials B.D.S. (above, p. 5). It contains five works: the *Ethics* (*Ethica Ordine Geometrico Demonstrata*=Eth.), the fragment on *Politics* (*Tractatus Politicus*=Pol.), the fragment *On the Improvement of the Understanding* (*De Intellectus Emendatione*=D.I.E.), a collection of *Letters and Replies* (*Epistolæ Doctorum Quorundam Virorum Ad B.D.S. et Auctoris Responsiones* =Ep.), and a fragment of a *Hebrew Grammar* (*Compendium Grammatices Linguæ Hebrææ*).

In 1687 there was published anonymously in Amsterdam a small treatise on the *Rainbow* (*Stelkonstige Reeckening Van Den Regenboog*). We know from the editors of the *Opera Posthuma* that Spinoza wrote such a work, and Colerus was acquainted with "some men of great note who had seen and read it." Since some of the views expressed in it were certainly held by Spinoza, and there is no direct evidence to the contrary, it is generally assumed that this treatise, forgotten evidently from the very first and only surviving in a very few copies, is a genuine work of Spinoza. With less certainty there is ascribed to him the authorship of a few pages on *Probability* (*Reeckening Van Kanssen*), printed about the same time as the treatise on the Rainbow and attached to the two copies of it which have come down. The essay is of little importance and there is nothing much to be said for or against its authenticity; except perhaps that there is a letter of Spinoza on the same subject printed in the *Opera Posthuma* (43, now numbered as 38) which contains much the same views.

Of far greater importance is the so-called *Korte Verhandeling* (*Short Treatise*). It had been known since 1703 that what was believed to be an early draft of the *Ethics*, written in Dutch and not in geometrical order, was in existence in Holland. First a summary, then two complete manuscripts, of this work were found in the last century, and it was seen to be not a draft of the *Ethics* but an independent earlier work. It was first published by Van Vloten in 1862 (*Korte Verhandeling Van God de Mensch en deszelfs Welstand*, i.e. Short Treatise on God, Man and his Well-being=K.V.).

The only other writings of Spinoza which research has brought to light are a few fresh letters and the fuller originals of some of those already printed. The editors of the *Opera Posthuma* tell us that he intended writing a Hebrew Grammar in his favourite geometrical order, and

also an Algebra "according to a shorter and more intelligible method"; but no traces of these remain. At the time of his excommunication he wrote a defence of himself and his opinions in Spanish; some part of this was probably incorporated, as Bayle reports, in the *Theological-Political Treatise*. He started a translation of the Bible into Dutch, but burned the part of it he had completed, together with other papers, a few days before his death.

The surviving works which are definitely to be ascribed to Spinoza are, then, the following :—

(*A*) Complete Books :

(i) the *Principles of Descartes' Philosophy*, with the *Metaphysical Thoughts*;

(ii) the *Theological-Political Treatise*; and

(iii) the *Ethics*. To these is to be added

(iv) the *Short Treatise*, although it must be remembered that it is a Dutch version of an original not meant for publication.

(*B*) The *Correspondence*.

(*C*) The Fragments :

(i) *On the Improvement of the Understanding*;

(ii) the *Political Treatise*;

(iii) the *Hebrew Grammar*.

Before proceeding to a short account of each of these it may be well to offer a remark on the collected editions.

Of these there have been six, five in the nineteenth century and one in the twentieth (there were none in the eighteenth).

The nineteenth-century editions are those of Paulus (Jena, 1802–3); of Gfrœrer (Stuttgart, 1830); of Bruder (Leipzig, 1843–6; this is the well-known and many times re-issued Tauchnitz edition); of Hugo Ginsberg (Heidelberg, 1875–82); and of Van Vloten and Land (the Hague, 1882–3, in two volumes; 1895, in three; 1914, in four). Of these editions the first two and the

fourth have now little importance. The third, that of Bruder, is handy and cheap, and, in spite of its scientific deficiencies, is likely to remain the text for the ordinary man. The later issues of the fifth, the Van Vloten editions, seem to have progressively deteriorated, while the first, hitherto the standard text, has become very rare and costly.

The most recent edition is the work of Dr. Carl Gebhardt, of Frankfurt, and appeared at Heidelberg in 1925. It is especially noteworthy for its full use of a key to the text to which attention had been directed many years ago, but which had never been systematically employed, that offered by the Dutch versions. These versions, the work of Spinoza's intimate friends and disciples, have been shown to have been made not from the printed text, but from the author's own manuscript, and in some cases seem to have been revised by the author himself. They thus offer independent testimony to what Spinoza wrote and serve as a control to the sometimes unsatisfactory printed text. An instance of the importance of the new work may be given. In the *Ethics* Dr. Gebhardt counts no less than 156 essential variants between the Latin and the Dutch. Sixty-nine of these are cases of omission, twelve of addition, and seventy-five of correction and improvement, in the Latin as compared with the Dutch. It would appear, then, that the Dutch version was made from a draft of the original Latin earlier than that from which the Latin was printed. Now the variants, with a very few exceptions, all occur in the first and second books. It follows that in the printed Latin text we have the fruits of Spinoza's latest revision, cut short presumably by his death (for the detail see the textual notes in the second volume of Gebhardt's edition, pp. 340 ff.).

Gebhardt's edition, based on a careful collation of all the available material and produced with becoming magnificence in a format closely modelled on that of the

Opera Posthuma, is, by a happy thought, a line for line reprint of the original edition of each of Spinoza's works, the paginations of which it preserves. Hence it establishes itself at once as the easiest text for ordinary reference, while owing to the wealth of information contained in its critical notes it is indispensable for the serious student. It is to be completed with a fifth volume containing all the original documents relating to Spinoza, and a sixth containing a brief commentary to the whole.

A word may be inserted here on the English versions.[1] There is as yet no complete translation into English of the whole of Spinoza's works, although one is promised by Prof. A. Wolf.[2] The nearest approach is that of Elwes in the Bohn series (*Chief Works of Spinoza*, 2 vols., London, George Bell & Co.). This is inclined to be literal, omits the *Short Treatise* altogether, and gives only excerpts from the *Correspondence*, but so far as it goes it is trustworthy. There are various versions of the separate works, but it will be best to mention them when we come, as we do now, to consider each separately.

It will be convenient to take them in the following order, which is not, however, in minor detail chronological :—

(1) The *Principles of Descartes' Philosophy*, with its appendix, the *Metaphysical Thoughts*; (2) the fragment *On the Improvement of the Understanding;* and (3) the *Short Treatise*. These are the earlier pieces and—with the exception of the *Short Treatise*, which was probably started some years earlier—were composed at Rhynsburg, between 1660 and 1663.

(4) The *Theological-Political Treatise;* and (5) the *Ethics*. These are the mature works and are the products

[1] There is a complete recent French version by Ch. Appuhn (Paris, 1907 f.); and a German version, with short commentary, in Meiner's *Philosophische Bibliothek* (Leipzig), by Baensch, Buchenau and Gebhardt.

[2] The first volume has now appeared (*The Correspondence of Spinoza*, Allen & Unwin, 1928), unfortunately too late to be used in this book.

of Spinoza's stay at Voorburg (1663–70), though the *Ethics* was revised later.

(6) The *Political Treatise*, the work on which Spinoza was engaged at the time of his death, written after 1670 at the Hague. (The *Hebrew Grammar* and its special problems may be dismissed with a reference to the complete account of it by N. Porges in the fourth volume of the *Chronicon Spinozanum*).

But first a word on the *Correspondence* (partial English version in Elwes, *Chief Works of Spinoza*, vol. II).[1]

The published correspondence of Spinoza covers the years 1661 to 1676. As originally printed in the *Opera Posthuma*, it comprised 74 letters (with the letter serving as a preface to the *Political Treatise*, 75). The number has now been increased to 86, of which 37 are from his correspondents, 49 from Spinoza himself. It should be noted that in modern references the original order is now generally abandoned and that of Van Vloten and Land (followed by Gebhardt) adopted.

The Letters are important for two reasons. First of all, like the letters of anybody else, they throw light on the writer's life, character and work, and thus constitute a primary source for his biography and literary history. Secondly, they are of more than personal interest, as will be understood if the function of the letter in the seventeenth century be remembered. The letters of learned men passed from hand to hand much as do printed papers or offprints in our own day, and served to bring to the notice of fellow-students whatever new work was being undertaken. From the one point of view we lose, since public correspondence such as this is hardly likely to contain the personal confidences which are so precious for posterity. Yet, on the other hand, there is compensation in the nature and breadth of the subjects treated. Some

[1] But see last note.

of Spinoza's letters, for instance the long criticism (Ep. 6) of some experiments of Robert Boyle, are substantial essays of considerable intrinsic value.

In view of the use made of the *Correspondence* in the course of the exposition, it may be well to indicate its principal contents. The most important are the large groups :—

(*a*) With Oldenburg (1–7, 11, 13–4, 16, 25–6, 29–33, these of the period 1661–5 ; then 61–2, 68, 71, 73–5, 77–9, these of 1675–6). They deal with miscellaneous topics, the early group largely with problems of chemistry and physics, the later with philosophy and theology (see below, pp. 176–82).

(*b*) With Blyenbergh (18-24, 27, all of 1665). These deal with the ethical problem on Spinoza's principles and are discussed below, pp. 182–92.

(*c*) With Boxel (51–6, of 1674), starting with spiritualism and ending with general philosophy (below, pp. 172–6).

(*d*) With Schuller (58, 63–4, 70, 72) and Tschirnhaus (57, 59–60, 65–6, 80–3). These, of 1674–6, are of primary importance for the study of Spinoza's metaphysics and are discussed below, pp. 192–8.

There are also several small series, of which that with De Vries (8–10, of 1663) showing Spinoza explaining himself to a young group of early disciples (above, p. 70), and that with Hudde (34–6) on the demonstration of the existence of God, are especially notable. Other letters which we shall have occasion to notice are those to Ostens (43), containing a spirited defence of the *Theological-Political Treatise* (below, pp. 169–71); to Meyer (12) on the Infinite and its appearances (below, p. 86, note 1) ; and to Leibniz (46) in reply to 86 (below, pp. 202–3 ; it should be remarked that Leibniz approaches him with a problem of Optics and addresses the cover to " Monsieur Spinosa, médecin[1] très celèbre et philosophe très profond "). The

[1] Freudenthal thinks this means what we now call a scientist (*Naturforscher*) (*Das Leben Spinozas*, ed. 1, p. 272 [ed. 2, p. 268] and note).

dignified letter to Fabricius (48), stating his reasons for refusing the Chair at Heidelberg, and that to his former pupil Albert Burgh (76), have been referred to already (above, pp. 8, 10).

We now come to Spinoza's works proper. First the three of the Rhynsburg period (1660–3).

(1) *The Principles of Descartes' Philosophy* (there is an English version by H. H. Britan, Open Court Publishing Company, 1905).

This account of the philosophy of Descartes, as we learn from letters of Spinoza to Oldenburg (13, first paragraph) and Meyer (15), was published by, and at the request of, friends. The second and third parts were notes dictated to a pupil " whom he did not wish to teach his own opinions " ; the first was added by way of a hastily written introduction. As Spinoza himself insisted, it does not profess at all to represent his own views, though, as modern scholars might have learned already from Hegel, it is of great value as an account of Descartes.[1] For the student of Spinoza it offers, however, one point of very great, although negative, significance. It is written in the geometrical manner afterwards adopted in the composition of the *Ethics* (below, p. 36 f.). Since Spinoza specifically disowned some of the views so calmly and neatly ' demonstrated,' it is clear that he was fully aware that this style was an order of presentation only, not a method of proof.

The appendix to the *Principles of Descartes' Philosophy*, the *Metaphysical Thoughts*, is also of no authority for determining Spinoza's own opinions, since it also is made up from the notes dictated to his pupil, and, as the sub-titles of both parts, particularly in the fuller Dutch

[1] See now an article by E. Gilson: *Spinoza Interprète de Descartes* (*Chron. Spin.* IV).

version, state expressly, deals with matters of popular interest only. At the same time, the book will repay attention. It contains a good deal of acute discussion on general questions of logic and metaphysics on scholastic lines, proving incidentally that scholasticism was by no means as dead in the seventeenth century as it is commonly supposed to have been, and suggesting that Spinoza had some acquaintance with at least the recent masters. It betrays throughout some of Spinoza's characteristic points of view. The first book, *Concerning Entity and its modifications*, calls out his strong nominalism with its corollaries that possibility and contingency indicate not facts in nature, but deficiencies in knowledge ; that time is not ultimately real, but only a " mode of thinking " ; and that good and evil are not absolute terms, but have only a relative significance (caps. 3, 4 and 6). The second, *Concerning God and the human mind*, already contains the criticism of the anthropomorphic position for which the maturer writings are famous (caps. 3 and 5). It speaks significantly of the " whole of nature " as " one entity " (so that, " in consequence, the idea or decree of God concerning created nature will be only one "), and of man as being a " part " of it and a " part which coheres with the rest " (caps. 7 and 9). Of " creation out of nothing " it says (c. 10) : " The use of the phrase suggests the absurd notion that there is a something called ' nothing ' out of which things are made ; " of miracles, " it would seem to be a greater miracle if God were to govern the world always with one and the same sure and immutable order than if he should abrogate laws which he himself ordained " (c. 9). These and similar points are taken up later and woven into the fabric of the *Ethics*, and it is interesting to know that they were in Spinoza's mind from the very first.

(2) The fragment *On the Improvement of the Under-*

standing (English versions by W. Hale White ["Mark Rutherford"], second edition, revised by Amelia H. Sterling, London, Duckworth, 1899; by Andrew Boyle in Dent's Everyman series; and in Elwes, vol. II) is particularly valuable for two reasons. First, it contains in germ the central conceptions of the mature system. Second, it shows the path by which Spinoza arrived at them. It thus not only enables us to see Spinoza's ideas in the rough; it also reveals to us the inner strife, moral and intellectual, out of which they emerged.

It opens with an autobiographical introduction (quoted below, p. 41 f.) in which Spinoza explains how his desire to find the moral end led him to the study of philosophy. It then proceeds at once to a detailed discussion of the nature of knowledge and truth. This investigation is of especial interest. Modern thought was revolutionised by Kant's insistence on Locke's principle that "before we set ourselves upon inquiries of a philosophical nature, it is necessary to examine our own abilities and see what objects our understandings are or are not fitted to deal with." Now Spinoza, so far as his finished system is concerned, is the very type of what Kant condemned as Dogmatism, because he built upon foundations which had not apparently been tested in the light of a critical examination by reason of its own powers. The deficiency is supplied by this early treatise.[1] It shows us how Spinoza came to the ideas which he afterwards put forward in an elaborate and dogmatic form, and proves that all the while he was aware of the general problem involved which, indeed, he enunciates in much the same phrases as Locke and Kant themselves. "The first principle which must guide our thinking," he tells us, "can be nothing else than the knowledge of that which constitutes the form of truth, and the knowledge of the mind and its properties and strength; for with the acquisition of this we

[1] *Cf.* Th. Ziehen in *Kantstudien*, xxxii (1927), p. 3 f.

shall have the first principles from which to deduce our thoughts, and the path by which the mind, so far as its capacity allows, can arrive at the knowledge of eternal things—when, that is" (Spinoza adds by way of emphasising the main contention), "we have an account of the powers of the mind" (p. 390, l. 5 f.).

The central conception of the fragment is that of the unity of all being, both in the world of ideas and in the world of objects. Nothing exists in isolation. The whole system of thought, like the whole system of things, constitutes a unity. Hence, just as there are no real things existing "without commerce" with other things, so there are no true ideas existing "without commerce" with other ideas (p. 368, l. 27 f.). The criterion of truth, as of reality, lies in coherence within the self-inclusive whole. An idea which if followed out in its deduced consequences is consistent with the whole of knowledge, is true. An idea which if followed out in its deduced consequences is inconsistent with the whole of knowledge, is false (p. 375, l. 26 f.).

It is clear whither the inquiry is leading. What is this "whole of being" (*omne esse*, p. 381, l. 17), this "one idea" in the light of which all other ideas are to be "concatenated and ordered" (p. 386, l. 4 f.)? What is a thing, or rather, since all things make up one all-comprehensive thing, what is *the* Thing? The whole of Spinoza's metaphysics is contained in the inquiry and its answer, but in essence it is already in this early work. We set out with the moral problem which Spinoza thought to solve through the acquisition of knowledge. We found that the essential preliminary to the acquisition of knowledge was the understanding of its nature, while the essential preliminary to the understanding of its nature was an investigation into the nature of truth. The problem of truth involved a consideration of the nature of the Real; but Reality

is one, and is what it is in virtue of its fundamental unity. And so the whole argument, which started with ethics and was to have found its solution in science, is thrown back (or forward) on what is to become the idea of God.

(3) The *Short Treatise*, available for English readers in Professor Wolf's edition (*Spinoza's Short Treatise on God, Man and his Well-being*, London, A. & C. Black, 1910), although both complete and comprehensive (the fragment *On the Improvement of the Understanding* is neither), must be used with great caution. The manuscripts from which it is printed are late and vary somewhat from one another. It is not an original but a translation, possibly, as the latest editor thinks, a translation of dictated and worked-up notes. It is full of contradictions and inconsequences, and in any case was not meant for publication. It should be taken, therefore, not as an authoritative work of Spinoza, but as a somewhat garbled record of what such a study circle as that led by De Vries, of Amsterdam (above, p. 10), put forward as Spinoza's views. This is clearly attested by the title-page of the best manuscript, which reads : " *Short Treatise on God, Man and his Well-being*, previously written in the Latin tongue by B. D. S. for the use of his disciples who wished to devote themselves to the study of Ethics and True Philosophy ; and now translated into the Dutch language for the use of the Lovers of Truth and Virtue, so that they who spout so much about it and put their dirt and filth into the hands of simpletons as though it were ambergris may have their mouths stopped and cease to profane what they do not understand."

The significance of this unusual exordium is clear from the last paragraph of the book, which is obviously from the hand of Spinoza and was possibly added by him when asked to review the whole : " So to make an end of all

this it only remains for me still to say to my friends to whom I write this : do not be astonished at these novelties, for you know full well that a thing does not cease to be true because it is not accepted by many ; and also, as the character of the age in which we live is not unknown to you, I would beg of you most earnestly to be very careful about the communication of these things to others. I do not wish to say that you should keep them entirely to yourselves, but only that, if you should begin to communicate them, you should be prompted by no other aim than the desire to further the happiness of your neighbour, while at the same time you should be clearly assured by him that the event will not disappoint your efforts . . ." (II, c. 26, end). From these passages it appears that Spinoza had already begun to be subject to suspicion, and that his disciples felt constrained to put together his doctrine in a more or less systematic form in order to defend both him and themselves from slander.

It has been necessary to insist on the unauthenticity of the *Short Treatise* in view of the attempts made since its discovery to base theories as to Spinoza's views and mental development on evidence provided by it alone. This is definitely illegitimate. At the same time the *Short Treatise* provides, as the reader will see, the most valuable illustrations for the authoritative doctrine. So regarded it has very great interest and importance. It is, in fact, the best, certainly the easiest, introduction to the general argument of the *Ethics*.

The *Short Treatise* is composed of two books, the first treating of " God and what pertains to Him," the second of " the perfecting of man so that he may be in a position to become united with God." We are at once within the same atmosphere as that of the treatise *On the Improvement of the Understanding*, but what there was last is here first. We *start with* " God and what pertains to Him," and what pertains to Him is the activity which, as the

immanent causality of the universe, is identical with what is variously called Providence or Nature. We pass to man, and by an investigation of the nature of knowledge on the one hand, and of the mechanism of human behaviour on the other, see how the highest emotions are those aroused by the highest knowledge. Since the highest knowledge is knowledge of the highest Being, the circle is complete and we end as we began with God.

The thought is essentially pantheistic, but the pantheism is of a very special kind.

Spinoza has effected the passage from nature to God, but he denudes neither nature nor God of their qualities. Theology to Spinoza is the absorption, not the negation, of natural science; and to identify God with Nature means for him that our positive knowledge of nature should form an essential part of our conception of God. This idea constitutes, as we shall see, one of Spinoza's great contributions to thought, yet it is enunciated already in the first book of this youthful treatise.

The second book also is remarkable, and that for the way of its approach to the problem of conduct. It contains a sober account of what was known or thought at the time about the nature of the emotions. With it Spinoza began to emerge, although on Cartesian lines, as a psychologist. He had realised, in fact, that the direction of human conduct is impossible except on the basis of a positive knowledge of the human mind. Thus, the Nature which is God, includes human nature, and the knowledge which is worship, is of ourselves as well as of external things. To the fragment *On the Improvement of the Understanding* the possibility of science rested on the idea of God; to the first part of the *Short Treatise* our conception of God rests on the findings of science. For the second and more characteristic part of the *Short Treatise*, the resulting scheme of scientific pantheism, through its interest in human conduct, has been turned

in the direction of psychology. The appreciation of this point is the key to the secret of Spinoza. His pantheism is not a mere formula, an abstract affirmation of the unity of Being. It is a practical contribution to the solution of moral problems, based on the findings of science, particularly the science of the human mind.

No one of the works we have dealt with hitherto is authoritative for the study of Spinoza's thought. The *Principles of Descartes' Philosophy* is a masterly summary of the doctrines of another. The treatise *On the Improvement of the Understanding*, although of supreme interest, is only an unrevised fragment. The *Short Treatise*, although both comprehensive and significant, is immature and of doubtful origin. We come now to the two great productions of Spinoza's prime, the *Theological-Political Treatise* and the *Ethics*.

(4) The *Theological-Political Treatise* (English version in Elwes, vol. I),[1] called by a modern student a "more reasoned, if less passionate, plea for freedom of thought and utterance than *Areopagitica* itself,"[2] is cast in a form as unusual in the twentieth century as it was conventional in the seventeenth. Like Hobbes' *Leviathan* (1651) it treats of the "matter, form and power of a commonwealth," "ecclesiastical" as well as "civil," and includes a large number of inquiries which to-day would find their

[1] There is an early translation going as far back as 1689, while the chapter (vi) on Miracles appeared earlier still, in 1683. Another was published in 1862, and is memorable for the fact that it called forth Mathew Arnold's essay on Spinoza (*Essays in Criticism*, vol. I). It is interesting to note that a version was begun by the poet Shelley, though only a fragmentary first draft has survived; and not only begun, but apparently completed, though for some reason withheld from publication, by George Eliot (J. W. Cross: *George Eliot's Life*, Edinburgh and London, Blackwood, vol. I, pp. 64–5, 193–4, and 318, letters of April, May and December, 1849, and March 1856).

[2] Vaughan, *Studies in the History of Political Philosophy*, Manchester University Press, 1925, vol. I, p. 90.

place in an introduction to Biblical literature and antiquities. It is essential, therefore, to disengage the thread of its argument.

The aim of the volume, according to the title-page, is to show that freedom of thought is not only compatible with piety and civil peace, but is the essential condition of them. In order to prove this point the ground first had to be cleared. Current theory held that the state was a theocratic institution, deriving authority from the will of God as revealed in the Scriptures. To grant liberty of thought, therefore (that is, liberty to question revelation), would be to open the door to civil anarchy. Since God is the head of the state, so the implied argument ran, blasphemy is the same as treason. These views were drawn from the principles of the ancient Hebrew polity as they were then understood, principles which, being the declared will of God, were regarded as both universally valid and immutable.

Spinoza challenged the whole theory by denying its basis. By an investigation of the original texts he demonstrated that the Bible did not, and was not meant to, contain one immutable system of politics at all. Its message comprised two distinct elements, one universal and permanent, the other transient. The permanent part is pure religion, and the "dogmas of the Universal Faith" (c. 14, p. 163, l. 14 ff.), which are set out much on the model of Lord Herbert of Cherbury, are binding for all time and all peoples. The other part, however, the laws of the Hebrew polity, although revealed (and Spinoza in the truest scientific manner takes his texts at their face value), were revealed only to the Jews and for the Jews. They stand and fall, therefore, with the existence of a Jewish commonwealth, a revival of which, it is interesting to note incidentally, Spinoza was disposed to regard as possible (c. 3, end).

The compass of the argument of the *Theological-Political*

Treatise is thus easily explicable. Spinoza had first to display the real character of the Hebrew theocracy, but in order to do this effectively he had to discuss the nature of the evidence on which our knowledge of it rests. This preliminary inquiry itself involved two further lines of research, the one philological, dealing with the actual documents in which the record survived, the other historical, explaining the material presented in the documents. Hence the account of prophecy with which the Treatise opens and the excursus into Biblical criticism with which it continues. These are not accidental but essential to the main argument, the demonstration once for all that the aim and object of Biblical (and any other) legislation is not the promulgation of abstract dogma, but the inculcation of moral habit.

It follows at once that thought is not subject to state control. But Spinoza goes further than that. Freedom of thought is not only possible within the state ; it is the prime condition of its health. The son of the secret Jews of Catholic Spain knew only too well that men can never be forced to think according to the arbitrary dictates of those in political control, and he affirmed boldly that " when men think one thing and speak another, the loyalty (*fides*) which is the very basis of the state is destroyed " (c. 20, p. 229, l. 28 f.). Life is not a matter of mere economic or political organisation. Mind must live as well as body. Hence mind must have its own freedom, and in its freedom the state finds its justification.

The argument is now old. Even in its own day it was not revolutionary. Yet no previous thinker had seized it in its full implications or stated it so openly and decisively. The genuine piety which breathes through every page of the Treatise only made matters worse. The uproar it caused was extraordinary. It was confiscated. It was burned. Its sale and further printing were officially prohibited. Over thirty condemnations of various synods

were published against it and its author between June 1670 and September 1676. It was not the only book so distinguished. Hobbes' *Leviathan* is a constant companion. But it is declared unanimously to be the most infamous of all, "so evil and blasphemous," one of the earliest declarations runs, "that to our knowledge the world has never seen its like" (Lg. p. 122). Yet the very number and bitterness of the denunciations are significant. The book must have been very widely read. Indeed, it has been noted from trifling variants in the copies which have come down to us that at least four distinct printings, spread over a period of years, were made of the 1670 edition in quarto, while in 1674 it was republished in octavo under various fantastic false titles.

It should be remarked that Spinoza did not seek this sort of reputation, and seems genuinely to have been astonished at the way in which his doctrine had been received. He begged his friend Jarigh Jelles to suppress a Dutch version of the Treatise which had been made without his knowledge (Ep. 44, first paragraph), and, as we shall see, proposed at one time to issue a fresh edition accompanied by explanatory notes (below, p. 178 ff.). Yet the bad repute of the Treatise persisted and had an important effect on the reception of Spinoza's doctrine. It caused the delay of the printing of his other great work, the *Ethics*, till after his death in 1677, and was largely responsible for the fact that this mature expression of his philosophy was for generations more execrated than read. Yet the setting of the two together followed a true instinct. The Treatise occupies a most important place in Spinoza's writings. It does not, like the fragment *On the Improvement of the Understanding* or the *Short Treatise*, belong to his youthful period, nor, as is often thought, does it stand midway between these early sketches and the maturer philosophy. It *is* the maturer philosophy

in a non-technical form. It is contemporaneous with, if anything posterior to, the *Ethics*. The *Ethics*, as we know from various passages in the correspondence, was well under way from 1663 to 1665, and it was only its completion and revision which were set aside in order that attention could be devoted to the Treatise. How important this fact is for the study of Spinoza's sources I have shown elsewhere,[1] but it is of far greater importance for the far more important study of Spinoza's intrinsic doctrine. We have in it a mature work published by Spinoza himself at the height of his powers; and with that remark we may leave it now, since for that very reason it has been drawn upon largely in the course of the general exposition.

(5) We come at last to the *Ethics* (English versions by Hale White from the Oxford Press, by Andrew Boyle in Dent's Everyman Library, and in Elwes, vol. II), the full technical expression of Spinoza's thought. It seems to have been begun about 1662. The first part was in the hands of friends in 1663, the third in 1665. It was ready for publication in 1675, but was withdrawn owing to the popular clamour (below, p. 176 f.). It was then under revision until Spinoza's death in 1677. It is thus his life's work in a very real sense, as its composition and revision extended over a full fifteen out of his short life of forty-five years. It is in five parts (the disposition of the material is noteworthy), the first "On God," the second "On the Nature and Origin of Mind," the third "On the Origin and Nature of the Emotions," the fourth "On Human Servitude or the Strength of the Emotions," the fifth and last "On the Power of the Intellect or Human Freedom." The whole makes up a volume of just over 250 pages in the large print and generous spacing of the

[1] *Spinoza, Descartes, and Maimonides*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1924, p. 63 f.

original edition, and it is thus one of the shortest of the great philosophical classics of the world.

Before we come to the account of its doctrine, which will largely occupy our second book, a preliminary point must be noted. The Ethics is "demonstrated in geometrical order" (*ordine geometrico demonstrata*). Each book is prefaced by a number of definitions and axioms, and the argument is presented in the form of a chain of propositions, each complete with its own demonstration. We know from the case of the *Principles of Descartes' Philosophy* (in which, as we have seen, Spinoza demonstrated in the geometrical manner propositions he held to be untrue) that he did not adopt this method of presentation because he had any illusions as to its cogency, and as a matter of fact, from casual references which he lets drop, we know that he considered it unnecessarily prolix and burdensome. Nor was the idea of employing geometrical form for the expression of philosophical ideas original to him. An attempt of a kind is mentioned as far back as the early schoolmen; and when Descartes was asked (*Objections* II, end) to draw up some of his speculations in this way, the significant point is that the request should have been made at all and should have been agreed to without surprise or much demur. Further, Spinoza's friend, Meyer, states explicitly in his preface to Spinoza's *Principles of Descartes' Philosophy* that "a few authors before Descartes had left to posterity parts of philosophy other than mathematics demonstrated with mathematical method and certitude," and even confesses to have made the same attempt, before he knew of Spinoza's work, on the Cartesian philosophy himself. No one could have voiced the call to treat a philosophical subject in mathematical fashion more strongly than Spinoza's contemporary, Thomas Hobbes, and that, too, significantly enough, with reference to ethics itself and in the preface to a volume which we know Spinoza to

have possessed (*De Cive*, Ep. ded. [p. 137 f., ed. Molesworth]).

The use of the geometrical method, then, for a non-geometrical subject-matter was not first suggested or invented by Spinoza. But it is at any rate unusual and must have cost enormous labour. We must still ask why it was ever adopted. The reason was certainly not that Spinoza was incapable of ordinary composition. Indeed, the evidence of the *Letters* and the *Theological-Political Treatise* apart, it may be held that the best of his writing is to be found in the longer scholia and appendices of the *Ethics* itself, in which he stood aside from the main path of his work and sought to gather up the argument or direct particular attention to special points in it. The reason why he adopted the geometrical form was not that he was incapable of ordinary composition, but that in a sense he was afraid of it. His continuous prose abounds in personal touches. Now a modern school of thought holds that personality is everything, and that all human knowledge, including science and philosophy, is only one form of the expression of the self which is art. Or we may recall the statement of Hume (*Treatise*, Book I, III, viii) : " It is not solely in poetry and music we must follow our taste and sentiment, but likewise in philosophy." Such a view is far from Spinoza. " I do not know," he wrote in a letter (Ep. 76, p. 320), " whether my philosophy is the best, but I know it to be true." Philosophy to him is an impersonal statement of impersonal truth. The ideal of impersonality is embodied in the severe style of the mathematician's exposition, and therefore Spinoza adopted that style for the expression of philosophy.

We must think, then, of philosophy (according to Spinoza) as the reflection in thought of the objective order of the universe, and of the philosopher as the mirror of that order ; or, to change the metaphor, of philosophy as

the self-articulation of the nature of things and of the philosopher as its voice. Hence the well-known sentences in which Spinoza speaks of considering "human actions and desires in the same spirit as one would lines, planes and bodies" (Eth. III, Pref., end). Like the universe of which it is the burden, philosophy is beyond personal interests. It is a reflection of the facts, and its merit is to reflect without passion or distortion.

The point is clear. Men are always obtruding their personalities into their judgments; they see things only as they wish to see them. There remains, then, only one way to get at the truth about things, and that is by listening to their own testimony concerning themselves. This is generally conceded in the *physical* sciences. Spinoza demanded that it should be the ideal in the *human* sciences as well. "When I applied my mind to Politics," he writes in the first chapter (§ 4) of the *Political Treatise* (and the deservedly famous phrases echo the words of the preface to the third book of the *Ethics*, quoted in full below, pp. 108–9), "in order that I might inquire into the matters pertaining to it with the same freedom of mind as that with which we are wont to treat of mathematical subjects, I took care not to deride human actions nor to deplore them nor to execrate them, but to understand them."

The sentiment is admirable. The difficulty, say the critics, is that men are not Euclidian lines and points. Of course Spinoza never said that they were. He is only asking that human affairs should be discussed as dispassionately as are geometrical figures. Yet it has been held that Spinoza exaggerated the impersonal character of mathematics, and that he was too prone to offer mathematical phrases as a panacea. The mathematician, it is said—not of course by those who hold to positions akin to that of Spinoza—is only analysing a whole which he has already constructed; he only finds in space the

properties which he has put into it. And to speak of the timeless necessity of the procession of all things from God ("as it follows from the nature of a triangle that its three angles are equal to two right angles"), is not to explain the temporal successions which form our world and the causal sequences which seem to be of its essence. We may leave the point for later discussion; it will meet us again in Spinoza's polemic against 'final causes' and in his demand for an identity of method in all the sciences (below, p. 45 ff., 109 ff.), as well as in his uncompromising determinism. It suffices here to note that the "geometrical order" of the *Ethics* is at its lowest the expression of the objectivity which Spinoza thought should characterise scientific research in all spheres, the sphere of human conduct included.

(6) Spinoza's last book, the *Political Treatise* (English version in Elwes, vol. I), was intended to demonstrate how "government can be arranged so as not to fall into tyranny and so as to be compatible with the peace and liberty of the citizens." It was to have been a comprehensive treatise on the principles of politics, built up on the basis provided by the *Ethics*, but further determined by the recognition that the way of the *Ethics* was for the few and very difficult. The fragment as we now have it consists of ten chapters, the first four dealing with natural and civil law, the next three (5–7) with monarchy, and the next (8–10) with aristocracy. The eleventh chapter, which was to be the first of an account of democracy, is only just begun, although fortunately we know Spinoza's general opinion on democracy (see below, p. 138) from references elsewhere. The work was interrupted by the writer's death.

The spirit of the *Political Treatise* is indicated in the remark of the first chapter that "those who persuade themselves that the multitude, or men distracted by

public business, can be induced to live by the bare prescription of reason, are dreaming of the golden age of the poets or of some fiction of their own. Hence a government which depends for its well-being on somebody's good faith and which cannot have its business properly looked after unless those who are engaged in it will to act honestly, will be very unstable. To be capable of lasting, its public affairs must be so ordered that those who administer them, whether they be led by reason or emotion, cannot be induced to show bad faith or to act basely. Nor does it matter for the security of a government by what spirit men are induced to administer affairs rightly so long as they do so administer them " (c. I, §§ 5–6).

We have, however, in the *Political Treatise* not a doctrine of disillusionment; Spinoza is still convinced that a science of Politics is possible. But he has had further experience of the strength of human passions; he had lived through the days in which the mob had (literally) torn to pieces the brothers De Witt. The Treatise is more measured and cautious than the earlier works, yet its peculiarities are theirs. Even in its unfinished and unrevised form it is remarkable for its insistence on experience in political affairs and for its wide range of empirical illustration. It is remarkable also, with all its clear grasp and bold application of principle, for its close attention to detail. It is not a Utopia, but a practical scheme; if it had been finished it would have been a statesman's manual. Its aim was to show " not what *ought to* be done, but, primarily, what *can* be done " (c. 7, § 2). And here we are confronted with the central characteristic of Spinoza as a thinker. He is not a dreamer, nor does he theorise for theory's sake. He is a practical moralist, soberly seeking to determine how best men can live.

III

GENERAL OUTLOOK

One of Spinoza's visitors said of him that he "*ne s'est pas découvert tout d'un coup*" (I.g. p. 238, l. 8). The same holds good of Spinoza's philosophy. It does not "reveal itself all at once." At the same time, a review of some of its general tendencies may set the reader in the frame of mind to appreciate it as a whole. The most important of these is best expressed in the words of the personal confession with which the fragment *On the Improvement of the Understanding* opens:—

"After experience had taught me that all things which are ordinarily encountered in common life are vain and futile, and when I saw that all things which occasioned me any anxiety or fear had in themselves nothing of good or evil except in so far as the mind was moved by them; I at length determined to inquire if there were anything which was a true good, capable of imparting itself, by which alone the mind could be affected to the exclusion of all else; whether, indeed, anything existed by the discovery and acquisition of which I might be put in possession of a joy continuous and supreme to all eternity. . . .

"For the things which generally offer themselves in life and are considered by men, so far as can be gathered from their actions, as the highest good, are all reducible to riches, honour, and the indulgence of the senses; but these all distract the mind to such a degree as to make it impossible for it to think of any other good thing. For example, as regards sensual indulgence, the mind is so

engrossed by it as to rest in it as if it were a real good, and is thereby entirely prevented from thinking of anything else; but, after it has been satisfied, there follows a very great melancholy, which, if it does not check the action of the mind, nevertheless disturbs and blunts it. The same distraction attends upon the pursuit of honours and riches, especially if they are sought for their own sake. . . . The pursuit of honour in particular is a very great hindrance, because it is necessary, if we would attain it, to direct our lives according to other people's opinions—that is, to avoid what they commonly avoid, and to seek what they commonly seek. . . .

"The cause of these evils appeared to me to be that all happiness or unhappiness depends solely upon the quality of the object to which we are attached by love. For on account of that which is not loved no strife will arise: there will be no sorrow if it perishes, no jealousy if it is appropriated by another, no fear, no hatred, and, in a word, no agitations of the mind. All these, however, arise from the love of that which is perishable, as are all those things of which we have just spoken. But love for an object which is eternal and infinite feeds the mind with joy and nothing else, and a joy which is not followed by sorrow. This, then, is something greatly to be desired and to be sought after with all our strength. . . ." (pp. 357–9, with omissions).

This passage is both notable in its own right—it was recommended by Schopenhauer[1] as "the most effectual means of stilling the storm of the passions"—and also supremely important for the understanding of Spinoza's mind and aim.

Experience had taught him that most of the ordinary aims of life are inadequate. The so-called 'good things' of the world, instead of bringing permanent satisfaction, serve only to create restlessness and disquiet; and since

[1] *World as Will and Idea*, IV, § 68.

the supply of them is limited, their pursuit leads inevitably to collision with others and strife. What is the remedy? To find a 'good' which is neither trivial nor fleeting and which is yet open to all. To the finding of this 'fixed' and 'common' good Spinoza tells us that he devoted his energies.

There are many approaches to philosophy. Some thinkers, and there are very great names among them, have come to it from the problems of physical science, some from those of pure mathematics, some from those of logic or metaphysics. Spinoza came to philosophy from the problem of conduct. No great thinker has been insensible to this problem; few, however, have felt its urgency so clearly and explicitly as did Spinoza. And he felt it for himself, not as a theoretical problem. A thinker like Hume could write of setting his philosophy aside when he stepped out of his library into the world. Spinoza elaborated within a workshop a philosophy which could enable himself and others to live in the world. His earnestness is striking. He writes of himself as "like a man stricken with a mortal disease, who sees certain death in front of him if a remedy is not found" (D.I.E. p. 359).

Spinoza, then, is primarily a moralist, and this is evident from the very titles of his writings. The first complete sketch of his philosophy is contained in the treatise on *God, Man and his Well-being*; its fullest expression in the work called expressly by the name of *Ethics*. The *Theological-Political Treatise*, the only original work of his own published in his lifetime, was written in order to demonstrate the practical point that a society could not exist without freedom. The *Political Treatise* on which he was working when he died is an attempt to show how settled government could be prevented from becoming a tyranny. Even his translation of the Bible and his Hebrew Grammar were undertaken

because he thought that the old Hebrew wisdom was of the greatest influence for the right direction of life. Whatever one may think of his work (and it has been held strongly that it is precisely on questions of morality that his views are most wrong), there is no doubt that in conception it was dedicated to the resolution of the problems of practical conduct.

Now if one takes up the completed system in the book called the *Ethics*, the opposite would seem to be true. "By 'cause of itself,' I understand that of which the essence involves existence, or that the nature of which cannot be conceived except as existing." "Everything which exists, exists either in itself or in another." "Substance is prior by nature to its modifications." These, the first of the definitions, axioms and propositions with which the book opens, are as far distant as they could be from contact with humanity. The terms 'substance,' 'attribute,' 'cause of itself' are words, difficult to understand without a commentary, which relate to certain very general aspects of the universe as a whole, and the propositions in which they are used are offered as an account, a very general and rarefied account, of the universe as a whole. Now terms and propositions relating to the universe as a whole are in the strict sense of the word metaphysical. It would seem, then, that the first part at least of the *Ethics* has nothing to do with morals at all.

It has; and if this point be appreciated the central peculiarity of Spinoza's outlook is grasped.

Spinoza was convinced that human conduct is only one case of universal conduct. Man is a part of nature. It follows, therefore, that if we would understand man we must first seek to understand nature. Nature in the narrow sense is the subject-matter of the science of physics; nature in the wide sense, of the science of metaphysics. Hence physics and metaphysics are the primary dis-

ciplines, and on them, "as everybody knows," he writes in a letter (Ep. 27, p. 160), "ethics must be founded." Spinoza, then, remains primarily a moralist, intent on discovering the 'good for man'; but his conception of 'good' is such as to demand an account of considerations far wider than either goodness or humanity.

We are here brought to a peculiar difficulty. It is often held that there is nothing corresponding to what we call 'good' in the world external to man; that 'values,' and especially moral values, are unique to humanity. It would follow that no light can be thrown on them by the study of external nature; indeed, it has been maintained on the contrary that the only light we have on external nature is that which is thrown by them. The universe, it has been held, is intelligible only if it is interpreted through the principle of value; and the principle of value is revealed uniquely within the human mind. Now Spinoza does not deny, as he is often thought to do, the values of human-kind; but he insists that they are not, at least in principle, unique to man. He does not hold, that is to say, that nothing human has value, but that everything else which exists has value as well. And so the 'values' of everything else, too, must be taken into account. The universe must yield its secret as a whole.

The trouble is that human beings have an inveterate habit, of which they are not always aware, of interpreting everything in terms of themselves. They imagine that everything is patterned after themselves and arranged for the convenience of themselves. This habit is crystallised in the doctrine of 'final causes,' in which they speak of God himself as if he were a man working for ends; that is to say, as if he had needs which he desired to satisfy. And speaking of nature in this way from their limited outlook they call the things of nature by hard or approving names in so far as they are conducive or not to

their own desires, and imagine that what they call 'good' (*i.e.* what happens to suit themselves) is really good, and that what they call 'evil' (*i.e.* that which does not happen to suit them) is really evil. But the truth is that everything, just as it is, is what God willed it to be, and what God willed to be is perfect.

"Men are born ignorant of the causes of things and yet have a desire of which they are conscious to seek for their own utility. From this it follows, firstly, that they think themselves free, because they are conscious of their wishes and appetites but, because of their ignorance, never even dream of thinking about the causes by which they were led to them; and secondly, that they do everything for an end which is that which is useful for themselves, and that it is which they seek. Hence it comes about that they only look for the final causes of whatsoever happens, and, when they are told them, accept them as a sufficient explanation of the happening. But if they cannot find out from another what such a final cause was, the only thing left for them to do is to turn to themselves and to reflect upon the ends by which they themselves are usually determined to actions of the kind. In this way they necessarily judge the mind of another on the analogy of their own.

"Further, since they discover, both within and without themselves, a multitude of means which contribute not a little to the attainment of what is profitable to themselves, the eyes, for example, for seeing, the teeth for mastication, plants and animals for food, the sun for light, the sea for fish, they come to look upon all natural objects as means for their obtaining what is profitable to themselves. Now, as they are aware that they find them and do not create them, they have excuse for believing that there exists someone besides themselves who made them ready for their use. For once they had looked on them as means it was impossible to believe that they had created them-

selves; and so they were bound to conclude, on the analogy of the means which they were in the habit of providing for themselves, that there exists some ruler or rulers of nature endowed with human liberty, who provided everything for them and made all things for their especial benefit. . . . But the truth is that nature set no end before itself and that all final causes are nothing but human fictions, as is sufficiently evident both from the foundation and causes of this prejudice and from those propositions in which I have shown that all things are begotten by a certain eternal necessity of nature and in absolute perfection. . . .

"After men have persuaded themselves that all things which exist, exist for their especial benefit, they are bound to consider that to be of the greatest importance in any thing which is most useful to themselves, and to esteem those things to be most excellent by which they are most beneficially affected. In this way they are bound to form those notions by which they explain nature, such as *good*, *evil*, *order*, *confusion*, *heat*, *cold*, *beauty*, and *deformity*; and from the fact that they suppose themselves to be free there have arisen notions like those of *praise* and *blame*, *sin* and *merit*. These latter I shall explain later when I have treated of human nature.[1] The former I shall deal with briefly here.

"It is to be observed that men have given the name *good* to everything which conduces to health and the worship of God, *evil* to whatever is contrary to them. But because those who do not understand nature affirm nothing about things themselves, but only imagine them and take the imagination to be understanding, they firmly believe, being ignorant both of things and of their own nature, that there is an *order* in things. For when things are so placed that, if they are represented to us through the senses, we can easily imagine them and

[1] See below, p. 116 n.

consequently easily remember them, we call them well arranged; but if they are not so placed that we can imagine and remember them, we call them badly arranged or *confused*. And since those things are especially pleasing to us which we can easily imagine, men prefer order to confusion, as if order were something in nature apart from our own imagination. . . . The other notions which I have mentioned are nothing but modes in which the imagination is variously affected. Yet they are regarded by the ignorant as being the principal attributes of things, because, as we have remarked, men believe that all things were made for themselves, and therefore call the nature of a thing good, evil, sound, putrid, and corrupt, in accordance with the way in which they are personally affected by it. For example, if the motion received by the nerves from objects represented through the eyes conduces to well-being, the objects by which it is caused are called *beautiful*, while those which excite a contrary motion are called *deformed*. Whatever stimulates the senses through the nostrils is called sweet-smelling or stinking; through the tongue, sweet or bitter, full-flavoured or insipid; through the touch, hard or soft, rough or smooth; those, lastly, which act through the ears are said to make a noise, sound or harmony. . . .

"Thus we see that all the means by which the common people are in the habit of explaining nature are only different sorts of imaginations, and so reveal not the nature of the things themselves, but only the constitution of the human imagination. . . . All argument, therefore, urged against us based upon such notions can be easily refuted. Many people, for instance, are accustomed to argue that if all things have followed from the necessity of the most perfect nature of God, how is it that so many imperfections have arisen in nature—corruptions of things till they stink, deformity such as to excite disgust, confusion, evil, crime, and the like? But, as I have just

said, they are easily refuted. For the perfection of things is to be reckoned only by their own nature and power; nor are they more or less perfect because they delight or offend the human senses, or because they are beneficial or harmful to human nature. But to those who ask why God did not create all men in such a manner that they should be governed by the dictates of reason alone, I answer only this: Because he had abundance of material for the creation of every kind of thing, from the highest down to the very lowest degree of perfection; or to speak more exactly, because the laws of his nature were so ample that they sufficed for the production of everything which can be conceived by an infinite intellect. . . ."

The Appendix to Book I of the *Ethics* from which these excerpts have just been quoted constitutes the classical expression of antagonism to the 'anthropocentric' tendency to interpret the universe through categories drawn from narrow human experience. As we shall see, it has occasioned unqualified horror in the minds of some, unqualified admiration in the minds of others. At this point it is desirable only to insist on the fact that, however theological in phraseology, it is a clear demand for what is now known as the scientific outlook. Science rests on the presumption that a dispassionate account of things is possible, and this is precisely what Spinoza is appealing for. The universe is vast and our task as thinking beings is to bring its facts together. But we can only bring them together as they should be brought if we classify them in their natural divisions, not in accordance with our personal needs or prejudices.

If the first great characteristic of Spinoza's philosophy is its ethical intention, the second is, then, what may be called its scientific orientation. He has a horror of abstractions, what he calls "transcendental terms" (Eth. II, 40 sch. 1), and in a phrase which was to kindle the

imagination of Goethe affirmed that "the more we know individual things the more we know God."[1] He is anxious to get at the facts, and all the facts. True, the 'facts' require understanding. There are degrees in human knowledge, and what seems a 'fact' to the plain man may be far from such to higher insight. The "individual things" of the philosopher are not, as we shall see later, the chaotic constituents of everyday experience or the mere instances of a general scientific law. Yet it is through reflection on everyday experience and grasp of scientific law that ultimately what is truely 'individual' is apprehended. The insight of the philosopher is more profound than that of the scientist or of the ordinary man, yet its material is the same. And so we can speak of Spinoza's interest in scientific fact although his ultimate point of view transcends that of conventional science, in the same way as we can speak of his passion for moral value although his ultimate point of view transcends that of conventional morals. Indeed, it is the interplay of these two motives, interest in scientific fact and passion for moral value, both grasped with the utmost boldness and pursued to their furthest consequence, which goes far to explain the peculiar fascination of his thought. This is particularly true of the book in which that thought found its mature expression. The *Ethics* leaves on the reader its most striking impress in virtue of its thoroughly systematic character. Its forcefulness is unique. It is supreme not only as a work of reflection, but also as a work of art. It has been compared to an ancient tragedy, its five books to five acts, the last knitting together the previous four and bringing them to their consummation. Its effect is cumulative. It breathes finality and completeness. It embraces every aspect of existence. Yet the breadth of

[1] Eth. V, 24; *cf.* D.I.E. p. 388, l. 5; Th.P. c. 4, p. 46, l. 6 f.; c. 6, p. 71, l. 28 f. And see below, pp. 213-4.

vision is controlled by concentration of purpose. The most universal metaphysical considerations, supported by the most closely reasoned physics and psychology, are only finger-posts on the path of what Spinoza himself calls the "life of the blessed" (*beatorum vita*, Eth. IV, 54 sch.) or "salvation" (*salus*, Eth. V, 36 sch.; 42 sch., end).

The third great characteristic of Spinozism, its synthetic outlook, is revealed particularly in its ethical scheme. Spinoza cannot conceive of the 'good' of which he is in search as an individual possession. The ideal of a superman breaking down the human ladder on which he had risen never occurred to him. From the very first he aimed at the creation of a *society* so that "as many as possible might join with him in the fruition" (D.I.E. p. 361, l. 2), and in the *Theological-Political Treatise* (c. 3, first paragraph) he gives as the reason that "true happiness and blessedness consist solely in the enjoyment of what is good, not in the vainglory that one is alone in enjoying it; he who thinks himself the more blessed because he is enjoying benefits which others are not does not know what true blessedness is." The place held in Spinoza's thought by his writings on politics is thus central. Far from being an otiose appendage, they are of its very essence. The subject nearest to his heart was not the nature of Substance, but the nature of man, and he was only drawn into an investigation of the nature of Substance because he thought it would throw light on the nature of man. But mankind to him meant not an isolated number of contemplative hermits, but an active and living society in which human beings help one another to come to the full development of their powers. Even at the height of the last book of the *Ethics* (V, 20) he insists that the love of God is strengthened in us the more we imagine others to share in it.

The novelty in Spinoza's outlook is not that ethics and

politics are inextricably interwoven. That 'man is a social animal' is a proposition enunciated by the Greeks, nor does Spinoza's gloss that the ways of social life do not come naturally, but must be taught—" men are not born, but are made social " (Pol. c. 5, § 2)—really conflict with the ancient view. Where Spinoza strikes a fresh note is in his basic idea that fundamentally there are politics and ethics in all the sections of the diversity of Nature. Human beings are not in this, or indeed in any other, respect a " dominion within a dominion," " something set aside from everything else " (Pol. c. 2, § 6). Every class of existent has its specific way of life, that is, its own society and its own moral laws. Everything clings to its kind and lives in accordance with the ways of its kind.

There is, however, something beyond these particular sympathies ; they are crowned by a universal sympathy. Above and beyond the communities of the individuals within their kinds, there is the community of the kinds themselves. The great divisions of nature, each constituted by simpler units, are themselves constituents of one supreme whole. Ultimately all things are united.

Here we have Spinoza's master-idea in metaphysics, an idea applied rigorously and remorselessly over all fields. The unity of the Whole affords for logic the norm of truth, and for ethics the fixed and permanent good. It is because of it that the study of man is only a branch, although an important branch, of the study of nature ; because of it that we must refuse to interpret the whole of nature through the ideas and aspirations of one of its parts, although that part be man. Nature must be allowed, Spinoza is convinced, to speak for itself, and as far as possible in its own terms. No one section of it has special rights or significance over against, and to the detriment of, any other.

These familiar points have made Spinoza the protagonist

of modern philosophic naturalism, yet he is by no means a mere 'naturalist.' In the Nature which he venerated he sees far more than a blind interplay of unintelligible forces. The narrative of the fragment *On the Improvement of the Understanding* already shows us at least so much, and the thread runs through all his writings. By " nature " he does not understand, he says, " only matter and its modifications," or a " mere mass of corporeal substance " (Th.P. c. 6, Spinoza's note on p. 69 ; Ep. 73, p. 307, l. 12) ; and by human life, " not merely the circulation of the blood and other things common to all animals, but more especially reason and true virtue of mind " (Pol. c. 5, § 5). Spinoza's sense of wholeness is undefiled by the scientist's vice of departmentalism, and that not in spite of, but because of, his scientific attention to detail. A naturalism which is to be of any value must embrace the totality of nature. Nature includes man, and man comprises much more than the mechanical discharge of animal functions. Freedom has for Spinoza a positive connotation. " The end of the state is not to turn men from rational animals into beasts or machines, but, on the contrary, to have care that both mind and body should carry out their functions in security " (Th.P. c. 20, p. 227). Spinoza takes into account both mind and body. He stands supreme and almost unique in that, within the sweep of a naturalistic metaphysic, he yet found room for all that is highest and best in man.

This is not to say, as is sometimes maintained, that Spinoza's philosophy is a religion ; still less, as Lichtenberg claimed in a well-known sentence, that it is the religion of the future. It is questionable whether the majority of mankind will ever even understand Spinoza's doctrine of God. At the same time there is no doubt that Spinoza's philosophy, although not a religion, is through and through religious ; and in this we recognise its fourth and possibly most significant general characteristic.

Ethical in aim and scientific in method it is dominated by the conception of the unity of all things; but this unity is conceived under the forms of religion and expressed in the terms of religion. We may protest with one of Spinoza's correspondents (below, p. 174): "I do not know your God (*tuum Deum ignoro*), nor what you mean by the word"; but the word is used by Spinoza in good faith and with the profoundest piety of conviction. God to him is so much the most real Being that he is the sole reality.

This theocentricity leads to conclusions which are abhorrent to the ordinary mind. Yet it is arguable that, unless we are to conceive of God merely as a magnified man, they are the inevitable outcome of a serious theism. It is idle to pretend that the universe is centred round man and arranged to suit his purposes, but it is equally idle to pretend that we have full knowledge of the purposes of God. Just because they are God's purposes and not man's they must take account of factors wider than the merely human. "The bees in all their work have no other end in view than to make provision for themselves; yet man, who is above them, has an entirely different end in view when he maintains and tends them, namely, to obtain honey for himself. It is the same in the case of man. In so far as he is an individual thing, he looks no further than his finite character can reach; but in so far as he is also a part and tool of the whole of Nature, his ends cannot be the final ends of Nature, since Nature is infinite and uses man as an instrument together with all other things" (K.V. II, c. 24).

The position may be illustrated from a passage of Tolstoy which uses the same striking simile: "A bee sitting on a flower has stung a child, and the child is afraid of bees and declares that the purpose of a bee is to sting people. A poet admires the bee as it sucks from the chalice of a flower, and he says that the purpose of a bee

is to suck the fragrance of flowers. A bee-keeper, noticing the bee collecting pollen from flowers and carrying it to the hive, says that the purpose of the bee is to gather honey. Another bee-keeper, who has studied life in the hive more closely, says that the bee gathers pollen-dust to feed the young bees and to rear a queen, and that its purpose is the continuance of the race. A botanist notices that the bee, flying with the pollen of a male flower to a pistil, fertilizes the latter, and considers that this is the purpose of the bee. Another, observing the migration of plants, sees that the bee helps in this work, and may say that therein lies the purpose of the bee. But the ultimate purpose of the bee is not exhausted either by the first, the second, or any of the processes the human mind is capable of discovering. The higher the human intellect rises towards the discovery of those purposes, the more obvious it becomes that the ultimate purpose is beyond our comprehension " (*War and Peace*, Epilogue, c. 4, end).

Spinoza would have agreed with what Tolstoy writes here. Only he would have said (as we have seen) that the primary absurdity lies in the search for final causes at all. And this leads to an important last point. The mystical tone of Tolstoy's deductions is absent from Spinoza. To the mystic the universe by its very nature is incomprehensible ; God is hidden, and it is no use trying to find him. To Spinoza, however, God is not the negation, but the ideal completion of knowledge. The universe is fundamentally rational, although it be too wide for our measures ; and the human reason is a part, although an infinitesimal part, of the infinite intellect of God. God, then, is not an *asylum ignorantiæ*, an obscure cause invoked as a verbal explanation of the incomprehensible. He is the ground of real explanation, being one and the same as Truth.[1] If mysticism means that

[1] K.V. II, c. 5 (G. p. 63, l. 1 ; W. p. 78, l. 15) ; c. 15 (G. p. 79, l. 16 ; W. p. 103, l. 16).

man cannot know everything, then Spinoza is a mystic. But if mysticism means that human search after knowledge is vain, then Spinoza is a rationalist of rationalists. His God, if not the God of revelation, is certainly a God who is revealed; and although there are ascending grades in knowledge, the highest is in principle open to all. The vision of the traditional mystic is incommunicable, and its joy cannot be shared. But for Spinoza (Eth. IV, 36 sch.): "it arises from no accident, but from the nature itself of reason, that the highest good of man is common to all; inasmuch as it is deduced from the human essence itself in so far as it is determined by reason, and also because man could not exist nor be conceived if he did not have the power of rejoicing in this highest good. For it pertains to the essence of the human mind to have an adequate knowledge of the eternal and infinite essence of God."

BOOK II

SPINOZA'S PHILOSOPHY

I

"GOD OR NATURE"

THE totality of all existing things Spinoza calls *God or Nature* (*Deus sive Natura*). The *or* (*sive*) has no special force and is equivalent to a sign of equation. *God=Nature*, then, is our starting-point.

The phrase strikes at once a fresh note. We are accustomed to oppose God to Nature, to think, that is, of Nature as created by God and of God as the creator of Nature. Now Spinoza, from a study of the well-known difficulties involved in the idea of creation, came early to the opinion that, in the absolute sense, "it cannot really be said to have taken place."[1] In any case, even if we accept the idea, we must remember that the creative process must be operative continuously.[2] God not only brought the world into existence; he keeps it in existence as well. He is thus the 'conserving' or sustaining power of the world, its permanent nature or organisation.

Fuller reflection leads to the conclusion that the distinction between 'organisation' and 'organised' is unreal. It is logical only, a distinction of intellect, not a distinction of fact. In our own small spheres within the whole of nature we may rightly say that we are distinct from our work. But the whole of nature itself has nothing outside it to be distinct from it. It is the only entity, and all distinctions and divisions fall not outside it but within

[1] K.V. I, c. 2 (G. p. 20, l. 36; W. p. 23, l. 33); *cf.* Ep. 4 (1661), end: "You must remember that men were not created, but only generated, and their bodies were in existence before, although in another shape."

[2] K.V. II, c. 16, long note (G. p. 82, l. 21 f.; W. p. 108, l. 13 f.); C.M. I, c. 3; II, caps. 1, 3 and 10.

it. God as the sustaining power of the world is not separate from the world so sustained. He is (we might say) the 'form' of its 'matter,' the 'law' of its 'content,' the 'structure' of its 'stuff.' But 'form' and 'law' and 'structure,' like 'matter,' 'content' and 'stuff,' are only mentally distinguishable from their correlatives. The pairs form one single indivisible whole.

Thus God, in the technical phrase made much of by Spinoza, is not a 'transeunt'[1] cause at all. He is not a cause outside of things which passes over into things and works upon them from without. He is 'immanent,' dwelling within, working from within, penetrating, impregnating all things. But this is metaphor and misleading. God is not a spirit omnipresent in the universe. He *is* the universe. God is all in all, and all things are in God. "Everything which exists exists in God and without God nothing could either exist or be conceived" (Eth. I, 15).

The argument is complete already in Spinoza's earliest sketch of his system. The *Short Treatise* accepts the traditional conception of God as the infinite Being, the most real and perfect of all beings. But it goes on to point out that ultimately nothing is real or perfect or infinite save the all-inclusive whole of Nature. If we start from the conventional conception of God and follow it out, we reach Spinoza's conception of Nature. In the same way, if we start from the conventional conception of Nature and follow it out, we arrive at Spinoza's God. "Nature is known through itself," he writes, "and not through any other thing. It consists of infinite attributes, every one of them infinite and perfect in its kind. To its essence pertains existence, so that outside it there is no other essence or existence. It thus *coincides exactly*

[1] *e.g.* K.V. I, c. 2 (G. p. 26, l. 17 f.; W. p. 30, l. 1 f.), and the two dialogues inserted between K.V. I, c. 2 and c. 3; Eth. I, 18; Ep. 73 (quoted below, p. 179). I use the somewhat barbaric form "transeunt" because "transient" has the different connotation of transitory.

with the essence of God, who alone is glorious and blessed." [1]

One of the difficulties in approaching Spinoza's conception of the all-inclusive reality lies in the three words he uses to express it. He calls it 'God,' he calls it 'Nature,' and he calls it 'Substance.' An attempt has been made to distinguish three stages in the development of his thought, each one finding its characteristic expression in each of these words. The attempt fails not only because there is not sufficient regularity in usage, but also because the triplicity of standpoint is fundamental. It is, as we have seen, God who is Nature, and it is Nature which is Substance; and the different words appear as the matters dealt with change and change about. The three primary problems of thought are those of origin, structure and stuff. When Spinoza is thinking of the first he would seem to use the word 'God'; when of the second, 'Nature'; and when of the third, 'Substance.' They are all one and the same, although from different points of view. This is really the argument of the earlier propositions of the *Ethics* just as it was that of the *Short Treatise*. The *Short Treatise* took over the conception of Nature and showed that if taken seriously it is one with God. Now the *Ethics* takes over the word Substance, a favourite word in current thought, and shows that Substance and God are one. The point is simple. The traditional philosophy had spoken of substances, each one of them independent and self-contained. Spinoza insists that such self-contained entities do not as a fact exist. All things are bound together inextricably. Hence, if only that which can stand by itself is substance, there is only one substance, the system of the whole universe. This system as being infinite—that is, self-

[1] K.V. Appendix I, end; *cf.* K.V. I, c. 2 (G. p. 22, l. 9 f.; W. p. 25, l. 9 f.).

coherent and self-complete—is one with the eternal self-sufficient and self-subsistent being called God. What the philosophers asked from the conception of Substance is in fact only given by the idea of God, and so Spinoza can say in his fourteenth proposition: "Apart from God there is not nor can there be conceived any substance." Henceforward he develops his doctrine not under the word 'Substance,' but under the word 'God.'

The God of the first book of the *Ethics* is the same as the God of the *Theological-Political Treatise*, but with a sense of fuller implication. The Treatise removes the barrier between God and Nature conceived as an active principle, thereby agreeing, one may note in passing, with the best theological thought.[1] Divine and natural forces are one. It follows that the order of Nature of which man is a part is the order of God, and that its fixed and eternal decrees are the decrees of God. It is no use turning to God by way of appeal against Nature. God *is* Nature. The more we know of natural things the more we know of God. It is, in fact, only in and through Nature that we know God at all. Hence there are no such things as miracles in the sense of something happening contrary to Nature. Something happening contrary to Nature would be something happening contrary to God and would afford argument not for the existence of God, but for the veriest atheism. God's will is eternal because it is one with his intellect, and his intellect is one with his essence. Hence in acting in accordance with his nature (wherein lies his freedom) he is articulating immutable facts. He does not, as does man, plan and will before acting. He knows and his knowledge is creative: "Whatever God wills or determines involves eternal necessity

[1] The point is that to speak of a creative Nature apart from God is either to set up a second God or to introduce a superfluous and complicating entity. See especially Pol. c. 2, § 2, and compare a passage of Berkeley (*Principles of Human Knowledge*, § 150), written some fifty years after, and *Chron. Spin.* I., p. 278 ff.

and truth; for we have shown from the fact that the intellect of God is not distinguished from his will, that we mean the same thing when we say that God wills anything, as when we say that God understands it. Wherefore by the same necessity by which it follows from the divine nature and perfection that God understands a thing as it is, from that same necessity it follows that God wills it as it is. But since nothing is necessarily true save only by the divine decree, it follows from this most clearly that the universal laws of nature are merely the decrees of God which follow from the necessity and perfection of the divine nature."

Now the opinions expressed in this and similar passages of the Treatise[1] are by no means novel in the history of thought. Indeed, not a single one of them is lacking a highly respectable ancestry. Yet it is these same opinions which appear in the *Ethics*. That "God necessarily exists; that he is unique; that he exists and acts solely from the necessity of his own nature; that he is the free cause of all things; that all things are in God and depend upon him in such a way that without him they could neither exist nor be conceived; and finally that all things were pre-determined by God, not indeed from freedom of will or from absolute good pleasure, but from God's absolute nature or infinite power"—so Spinoza himself summarises his position at the beginning of the appendix to the first book of the *Ethics*. There is nothing here of special remark. Even the last point, which has been a stumbling-block, is only an assertion of the fact that freedom consists in acting in accordance with one's own nature, a position, distinguishing the freedom which is self-determination from whim and caprice, which is as old as moralising itself. The attack on 'final causes' with which the

[1] *Cf.* Th.P. c. 3, p. 31, l. 31 ff., and caps. 4 and 6. The quotation is from c. 6, p. 68, l. 27 ff.

passage concludes (quoted in part above, p. 46 ff.), and which is implicit in the argument of the Treatise as well, only takes up earlier views. Indeed, the pronouncement that " God's thoughts are not our thoughts nor his ways our ways " is familiar from the Hebrew prophets. The fascination of Spinoza's doctrine would seem to lie rather in the calm serenity of its expression than in its novelty. But we must examine it first in greater detail.

To Spinoza God and Nature are one, but the Nature which is God is far wider than the world of our experience. Human thought can 'contain' him no more than can the 'heaven of heavens.' Thought is limiting. It proceeds by way of definition, and definition means demarcation. But the infinite and all-inclusive Being has no limits, or at least none which we can affirm. It is limited only by the facts of its own nature, and that nature inevitably transcends human categories. In the following out of this thought Spinoza, starting as usual from the forms of theology, came to some highly interesting conclusions.

His early writings show him struggling with the problem of the nature and definition of God. It is vain, so he writes in the *Short Treatise*, to attempt to define God by way of genus and differentia, since God is by hypothesis unique, and hence in a class by himself. But a cataloguing of his qualities—goodness, wisdom, omnipotence, and so on—is equally useless. It may be true to say that God is good and that God is wise, but that tells us nothing about the essence of God. We may pile up the adjectives to infinity, but they are statements of properties, not of essence.[1] The problem resolves itself, therefore, into the question whether there are any elements which we can distinguish in God as belonging to his essence, that is, to use the definition of the second book of the *Ethics*,

[1] K.V. I, c. 2, end and c. 7; D.I.E. p. 381, n. 1.

elements of such a kind that "with their presence" God "is posited, with their absence, removed."

When God is conceived as transcendent, this question admits of no answer. We can only rest in a type of agnosticism which has had a profound influence throughout the whole history of human thought, the so-called *via negativa*, the 'negative way.' We can refuse to ascribe positive attributes to God at all. God is of a different kind altogether from created things, and therefore we can only describe him (so this view would have it) by way of contrast with created things. We say that he is 'one,' but all that that means is that he is not what in the world of our experience we know as 'many.' We say that he is 'good,' but all that that means is that he is not what in the world of our experience we know as 'evil.' We say that he is 'living,' but all that that means is that he is not what in the world of our experience we know as 'dead.' He is the antithesis and reversal of all our ordinary modes of thought. He is 'infinite' and hence unapproachable by the 'finite.'

This enlightened, though somewhat chilling, theism, which combines a profound sense of the existence of God with a profound distrust of our ability to know him, is fully represented on what might be called the theistic side of Spinoza. When he leaves the technical forms of his own deeper thought and speaks in popular terms, we find what is possibly the fullest expression of this strain of reflection.[1] Yet it is not final; it is a stage, but not the highest. It has taught us that we cannot exhaust the character of the infinite by the use of finite categories, but it has not necessarily excluded the use of any sort of category. The doctrine of immanence changes the whole method of approach. If we treat of God as transcendent —"as he acts towards things outside himself"—we are

[1] For an early discussion see C.M. I, c. 6 and II, c. 6; and *cf.* below, pp. 174–5.

confined to the 'negative way.' Spinoza, by rejecting the doctrine of transcendence, is enabled to study God positively as "he is in himself" (K.V. I, c. 2, last paragraph). Other thinkers had said that we can know nothing of God except through his workings in Nature. Spinoza, having identified God with Nature, looked at Nature and in its essence saw the essence of God. The knowledge of God so derived may not be complete; according to Spinoza it certainly is not. But for all that it may well be (and here Spinoza makes a telling and useful distinction) adequate as far as it goes. "I do not say that I know God completely, but that I understand some (not all, and not the greatest part) of his attributes: the fact that I do not know most of them does not prevent me from knowing those I do. When I began to learn Euclid's Elements, I understood first that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles. I perceived this property of a triangle clearly, although I was ignorant of many others" (Ep. 56; *cf.* below, p. 176).

Spinoza, then, has embarked on the search for the essential characters of the universe. The inquiry is not necessarily chimerical. Experience has always suggested to thought that there are such irreducible constituents of reality. Exactly what they are, however, is in dispute. Some have said that all is matter and have tried to show that everything can be explained in terms of, that is, can ultimately be reduced to, matter. Others have held that matter by itself is inert and that therefore the irreducible minimum is matter and motion. Thinkers who are less impressed by the physical side of things have stressed the importance and unique character of mind. It is mind, they say, which is the sole reality, the only thing which can exist, and be conceived, by itself. Matter can be understood as a relatively low stage of mind. Mind cannot be understood as a relatively high organisation of matter. Spinoza's place in this controversy is indicated

in his doctrine of 'attributes,' his name for irreducible aspects of reality. An attribute is "that which intellect perceives as constituting the essence of Substance" (Eth. I, def. 4), that is to say, it is Substance as revealed to knowledge. According to Spinoza, two such self-revelations of Substance are known to us. These, which are the most highly generalised forms of mind and matter, he calls, following Cartesian usage, Thought and Extension.

So far, we have nothing extraordinary. The novelty lies in his treatment of the problem of their relationship with one another. He not only held that the universe is a unity in which Thought and Extension were to be found together, but, and here we have the essential point, he held that it was fully expressed in each one of them separately. It is not true to say that the physical *is* the mental, or the mental the physical. "Extension so far as it is Extension is not Thought" (Ep. 4, p. 13, l. 24), and Thought so far as it is Thought is not Extension. Yet it is possible that the physical and mental, although not the same as one another, should yet be distinct and complete expressions of one and the same reality. Jacob and Israel are two different names, yet, each from a different point of view, signify one and the same man (Ep. 9, end). Physical emptiness is certainly not the *same* as the feeling of hunger. Yet the feeling of hunger may be the appearance in the mental world of a fact '*x*' which in the physical world appears as emptiness. Each may be a complete and true expression of the underlying reality in the same way as, in different languages, there are many complete and true equivalents of one idea. Languages are many. Each expresses an idea fully. But the idea itself remains integral and indivisible. So, according to Spinoza, each separate attribute expresses the real fully, and yet reality remains integral and indivisible.

It should be stated at once that this doctrine, however puzzling in the abstract, has in its application to the

problems of psychology proved of the greatest practical value; but leaving this fact for later discussion we may note here that the helpful analogy just quoted from M. Brunschvicg's volume on Spinoza[1] suggests a further thought. There are many languages, each one self-contained and complete in itself. Are there only two attributes? Spinoza, and this in his earliest discussion of the matter, definitely says not. He speaks throughout of *infinite* attributes. It is true that by 'infinite' he means not an indefinitely large number but 'complete in kind,' and that therefore the two we know might, as has been maintained, be called by him 'infinite.' Yet it is quite certain that in his early discussion at least he meant by 'infinite' more than two. He says, for example, that "we have so far not been able to discover more than two," and that "up to the present time only two of all these infinites are known to us through their own essence,"[2] remarks which certainly imply that he thought that there were more and had been trying to discover them. It would be possible to maintain that, as he had failed to discover any more than two by the time he wrote the *Ethics*, he had come to the conclusion that there were in fact only two. Yet in the late letter (1674), already quoted (above, p. 66), he compares his imperfect knowledge of the attributes with the imperfect character of his knowledge of geometry, the imperfection lying not in the character of the knowledge, but in its extent: "The fact that I do not know most of them does not prevent me from knowing the few that I do. When I began to learn the Elements of Euclid the first thing I grasped was that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles; I perceived that one property clearly, although I was ignorant of many others."

The attributes, then, are in number more than the two

[1] Paris, Alcan, ed. 2, 1906, p. 67.

[2] K.V. I, c. 1, note (G. p. 17, l. 37; W. p. 19, l. 18), and c. 7, note (G. p. 44, ll. 26–7; W. p. 52, ll. 21–2).

we know, a conception which is one of the standard cruces of Spinozistic interpretation. However, the question was raised by one of Spinoza's friends during Spinoza's own lifetime, and in a later chapter (below, p. 193 ff.) we shall see his own answer to it. So far as concerns us at present it is necessary to note one point only. Whatever Spinoza meant positively by the attributes other than those of Thought and Extension, negatively his meaning is plain. Our experience seems to be confined to Extension and Thought, but it does not follow that the universe is similarly confined. We dare not bound the universe by our standards. The world as a whole is vaster than we are, and we must learn humility in our approach to it. If we follow up the implications of our own selves we are led beyond ourselves: "According to the foregoing consideration of Nature we have so far not been able to discover more than two attributes only which belong to this all-perfect Being, and these give us nothing adequate to satisfy us that this is all of which this perfect Being consists; quite the contrary, we find in us a something which openly tells us not only of more, but of an infinity of perfect attributes which must belong to this perfect Being before he can be said to be perfect. And whence comes this idea of perfection? This 'something' cannot be the outcome of these two attributes; for two can only yield two, and not an infinity. Whence, then? From myself? Never; else I must be able to give what I do not possess. Whence, then, but from the infinite attributes themselves, which tell us that they are, without however telling us at the same time what they are: for only of two do we know what they are" (K.V. I, c. 1, long note, end).

The doctrine of the infinity of the attributes is thus no piece of empty mystification. It is a recognition of a real fact of our experience. We seem at times to have an insight into wider and fuller realities, premonitions which

point beyond our narrow grooves. Spinoza's doctrine is an appeal to look beyond ourselves, a condemnation of an over-facile self-sufficiency. "We may be in the universe as dogs and cats are in our libraries, seeing the books and hearing the conversation, but having no inkling of the meaning of it all" (William James: *Pluralistic Universe*, London, 1909, p. 309). We are not everything, not even the most important thing. We are only a part of a vast whole which we do not fully understand, indeed, cannot fully understand.

Whatever Spinoza may have meant by the infinite attributes, he is at any rate clear on the two of them which are known to us, Extension and Thought. Extension and Thought are fundamental characters of the real, and hence are to be included within our idea of God. That God is Thought is a doctrine common to Greek and mediæval philosophy and need call for no special comment; but that God is Extension rings strangely on the ear. It is therefore important to remind ourselves that this doctrine, too, is not peculiar to Spinoza. It is the common property of the whole mystical tradition and is found also in both Jewish and Christian philosophers and theologians. It was, moreover, a theme of contemporary speculation (for the evidence see Dunin-Borkowski's *Der junge De Spinoza*, Münster i. W., 1910, p. 357 ff.). Spinoza may well have been struck by the passages in Descartes' Correspondence (which we know him to have possessed in the Dutch version) in which Henry More, the Cambridge Platonist, re-affirmed this old Cabbalistic belief.[1] It is

[1] *Œuvres de Descartes*, ed. Adam and Tannery, vol. V, pp. 238 and 305. From Henry More the doctrine was to be handed on to Locke and Newton (Gibson, *Locke's Theory of Knowledge*, Cambridge, 1917, p. 245 ff.); Berkeley already remarked (*Commonplace Book*, ed. Fraser, 1901, p. 52) that Locke seemed to make God extended. With regard to More himself, it is interesting to note that he based his "refutation" of Spinoza on the ground that Spinoza's one Substance is necessarily Matter; *cf.* Mackinnon: *Philosophical Writings of Henry More*, Wellesley College Publications, Oxford Press, 1925, pp. 293–5.

at any rate remarkable that he should have replied to his critics (Eth. I, 15) in much the same way as More had to Descartes, that to say that God is extended does not mean that he is divisible into parts. The fact is that the innocent proposition that spaciality is a fundamental character of the Real gains far more in colour than in meaning if for the Real we substitute, as Spinoza did so calmly, God. "God an extended substance—we are back at the merest idolatry!" was the outcry; and the doctrine brought down on itself all the prophetic denunciations of idols of stone. It would have deserved them if Spinoza had meant either by God or by Extension just the same as his critics. To say that God is extended is absurd, if by God we mean the transcendent God apart from the world. God would then be an object in space like and among other objects; and space itself, comprising as it would both God and the world, would be, in fact, God. But Spinoza's God is not an object outside the world, which together with the world makes up the universe. He is himself the universe within which the distinctions and differences constituting the world obtain. And if so, he is among other things inevitably and irrevocably extended. Or rather he is not extended (that is, an object *in* space), but Extension (the whole system of space) itself. He is, in the old Philonic and Rabbinic phrase, the "place of the world" although "the world is not his place." A similar remark applies to the attribute of Thought, although for some reason it seems less indecent to speak of God as Thought than as Extension. God is the whole system of thinking, not the thought of any individual person, but the world of infinite mind.

It is easy to inveigh against a doctrine which identifies God with the universe and which sees in the essential characters of the one essential characters of the other. Yet it must be repeated that the universe, according to Spinoza's conception of it, is far more than the physical

world. As has been said happily: "God has not been reduced to Nature, but Nature exalted to God" (Pollock, *Spinoza* (1912), p. 331). Spinoza's God is the fulness of being, the supreme reality. Such characters, therefore, as constitute the Real as we know it must constitute, at any rate in part, the essential nature of God. Spinoza is trying throughout to give content to the word God, and whatever one may think of the result it is indubitable that few have made the attempt in so forceful and noble a fashion. "I have read most of the philosophers," writes so early an admirer as Lucas, "and I assert in good faith that there is no one of them who gives more beautiful ideas of the Deity than do the writings of Mr. de Spinosa"; and the phrase is echoed in the remark of the nineteenth-century man of science: "the student of nature, if his studies have not been barren of the best fruit of the investigation of nature . . . will have enough sense to see that when Spinoza says *by God I understand a being absolutely infinite, that is, a substance consisting of infinite attributes*, the God so conceived is one that only a very great fool would deny even in his heart" (Huxley, *Evolution and Ethics*, Eversley edition, p. 140, *ap.* Wolf in *Chron. Spin.* IV, p. 263).

God, then, articulated in the systems of Extension and Thought (and of 'infinite' attributes besides) comprises all things, and that of the free necessity of his own nature, not as the result of any passing whim or caprice. Yet he is not their mere framework, a passive container or conserver. He is their active source. "It is as impossible for us to conceive of God as not existing as to conceive of him as not acting" (Eth. II, 3 sch.). "There are bound to follow from the necessity of the divine nature an infinity of things in an infinity of ways; . . . and since all things are in him, there can be nothing outside him by which he is determined or compelled to action, and therefore he acts from the laws of his own nature

only and is compelled by no one. . . . Hence it follows, firstly, that there is no cause which can excite God to action, either extrinsically or intrinsically, except the perfection of his own nature; and secondly, that God alone is a free cause, for God alone exists from the necessity alone of his own nature and acts from the necessity alone of his own nature."

The passage (I, 16; 17 dem. and corr.) continues with a polemic against those who understood God's freedom, not in the sense of purely rational activity, but in a way modelled on human caprice: "There are some who think that God is a free cause because he can, as they think, bring it about that those things which we have said follow from his nature—that is to say, those things which are in his power—should not come into being or be produced by him. But this is simply to say that God could bring it about that it should not follow from the nature of a triangle that its three angles are equal to two right angles, or that from a given cause an effect should not follow, which is absurd. . . . I know, indeed, that there are many who think themselves able to demonstrate that both intellect of the highest order and freedom of will pertain to the nature of God, for they say that they know nothing more perfect which they can attribute to him than that which is the chief perfection in ourselves. But although they conceive God as actually possessing the highest intellect, they, nevertheless, do not believe that he can bring it about that all those things should exist which are actually in his intellect, for they think that by such a supposition they would destroy his power. If he had created, they say, all things which are in his intellect, he could have created nothing more, and this, they believe, does not accord with God's omnipotence; so, then, they prefer to consider God as indifferent to all things, and as creating nothing beyond that which he has decreed to create by some irresponsible act of will. But

I think that I have shown clearly enough that an infinity of things in an infinity of ways, that is to say, all things, have necessarily flowed, or are continually following, by the same necessity, from the sovereign power, that is, the infinite nature, of God, in the same way as it follows from the nature of a triangle, from eternity and to eternity, that its three angles are equal to two right angles. The omnipotence of God has, therefore, been actual from eternity, and will remain in the same actuality to eternity. In this way the omnipotence of God is, in my opinion, far more firmly established. . . ." We then learn, what is obvious from the whole argument, that human perfections do not obtain in God: "Moreover,—to say a word, too, here about the intellect and will which we commonly attribute to God,—if intellect and will appertain to his eternal essence, these attributes cannot be understood in the sense in which men generally use them, for the intellect and will which would constitute his essence would have to differ entirely from our intellect and will, and could resemble ours in nothing save the name. There could be no further likeness between them than that between the celestial constellation of the Dog and the animal which barks."

This passage,[1] which could be paralleled from much theological writing, brings us to a curious result. Spinoza's doctrine of immanence has become almost one of transcendence. God is transcendent to any and every one of the parts of nature because he is the whole of Nature itself. For "Nature is not bounded by the laws of human reason which consider nothing beyond man's true utility and conservation, but by an infinity of other things which

[1] I, 17 sch. (with the last paragraph *cf.* already, C.M. II, c. 3, end and c. 11, end). The whole position is valid only at the lowest stage of knowledge, and holds only of over-confident and thoughtless anthropomorphisation. The human mind at its best, that is, when it comes to its own true self, can and does apprehend something of God, and that in virtue of its very nature (above, p. 56; below, p. 153 ff).

have respect to the eternal order of the whole of Nature of which man is only a small part."[1] It is, then, because God is the whole of Nature that he is as a fact transcendent to humanity. It is only a part of God, as it were, which is in human beings or in any other particular element of the universe; and since the whole is greater than its parts it is not exhausted by or in any one of them. The One is vaster than the Many, although it is made up of them. Yet for all that it is not distinct from them. Nature is not an entity above and beyond natural things. Whatever exists exists within the universe, and the universe is what it contains.

[1] Pol. c. 2, § 8 repeated from Th.P. c. 16, p. 176, l. 34 ff.; *cf*. Th.P. c. 6, p. 74, l. 8 ff., and below, p. 212.

II

NATURE AS A SYSTEM OF MODES

The contents of the universe, the finite constituents of infinite nature, are called by Spinoza "modes." The modes include what we call things, but the term is used with a special implication. The word 'thing' suggests something completely independent, a self-contained entity distinct and separate from all others. Now Spinoza's doctrine, as we have seen, denies that in the absolute sense there are any such 'things' in existence. There is only one thing, the unitary system of all things. What we usually call things are fragments, parts of this widest whole. Spinoza does not dismiss the things of experience as mere illusions; they are facts, although not perhaps exactly what they seem. But, as facts, they are not self-dependent; they depend on, or rather inhere in, something else. They are not each one separate substance; they are all 'modifications' (*modificationes*) or 'states' (*affectiones*) of the one Substance.[1]

Within, then, the one and unique Substance ("God or Nature") there is held the multiplicity of the modes. Or as Spinoza puts it, taking over an old scholastic distinction, Nature presents two aspects, *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*. "By *natura naturans* [nature natur*ing*, that is, nature as creative] is to be understood that which is in itself and is conceived through itself, or those attributes of substance which express eternal and

[1] For the earlier history of the word *modus*, and for its connexion in Spinoza's writings with *accidens*, *affectio* and *modificatio*, see Richter's *Spinozas philosophische Terminologie* (Leipzig, Barth, 1913), cap. 5, pp. 82–9.

infinite essence—that is to say, God in so far as he is considered as a free cause; but by *natura naturata* [nature natur*ed*, that is, nature as created] I understand everything which follows from the necessity of the nature of God or of any one of God's attributes, that is to say, all the modes of God's attributes in so far as they are considered as things which are in God and which without God can neither exist nor be conceived" (Eth. I, 29 sch.). *Natura naturans* is thus God apprehended as cause; *natura naturata* is God apprehended as effect. They are not distinct from one another except logically. They are one and the same infinite whole considered now as process, now as result.

It is necessary here to introduce a further distinction. When Spinoza says that by *natura naturata* he understands "everything which follows from the necessity of God's nature or of any one of God's attributes," we must interpret his meaning in the light of the immediate reservation, "that is to say, all the modes of God's attributes *in so far as they considered as things in God and which without God can neither exist nor be conceived.*" *Natura naturata* is the modal world as apprehended by an intelligence which can see it "as in God"; but this apprehension is far above our ordinary experience of nature. As Spinoza himself says roundly: "Things are conceived by us as actual in two ways, either in so far as we conceive them to exist in relation to a certain time and place, or in so far as we conceive them to be contained in God and to follow from the necessity of the divine nature" (Eth. V, 29 sch.). We do not see nature in its perfection so long as our grasp of it is imperfect. All that we can say of it, therefore, is necessarily subject to revision in the light of fuller knowledge, holding rather of what Spinoza calls the "common order of nature" (*communis ordo naturæ*), that is, the world of sense-presentation, than of *natura naturata* itself, the world as it really is. The distinction

must not be misunderstood. There are not two worlds, one of which is the shadow of the other. The world of sense *is* the real world, but the real world as seen by our imperfect vision. We shall see later how in principle the vision may be changed so that the world is apprehended in its reality. Till we reach that stage, however (below, pp. 140, 146, 154), it must be remembered that what is here said of nature refers not to *natura naturata* in the strict sense, but to our imperfect view of it in our every-day experience.[1]

When we turn to that world we find in it factors of varying generality. Some of them are more comprehensive than others. These comprehensive factors Spinoza calls "infinite modes" as opposed to particular things which are "finite modes."

We may take these two types of modes separately.

What Spinoza means by an "infinite mode" is well explained in a passage of the *Theological-Political Treatise* (c. 7, p. 88). "In the examination of natural things we try first of all to investigate those things which are most universal and which are common to the whole of nature, I mean, motion and rest,[2] and their laws and rules which nature always observes and through which it acts continually." Motion-and-rest is thus the most general character of *natura naturata* under the attribute of Extension. It is the first step, as it were, towards its self-particularisation under that attribute, and is called by Spinoza in a later letter (64) an infinite mode "of the *first* order." Another infinite mode, this "of the *second* order" (the passage in the letter continues), is the "*facies totius universi*—the face of the universe as a whole."

[1] For the problem of the relationship between the world as it really is and the world as it is revealed to our ordinary apprehension, see Joachim: *Study of the Ethics of Spinoza* (Oxford, 1901), 119 ff. It should be remarked that the difficulty is not peculiar to Spinozism.

[2] Or rather "motion-and-rest." The thinkers of the day ascribed positive existence to the absence of motion.

The most general or "infinite" modes are, then, of two orders: the higher is motion-and-rest, the lower, the "face of the whole universe." Motion-and-rest lies, as it were, between the attribute of Extension and the "face of the whole universe"; and the "face of the whole universe," we are told, "although varied in an infinity of ways," that is, although made up of diverse elements diversely acting and reacting on one another, yet "remains always the same."

This seemingly mysterious and picturesquely phrased doctrine of Spinoza is verbally reminiscent of Neo-Platonic theories of emanation. Yet in its application it is entirely and characteristically his own.

In his conception of motion-and-rest Spinoza is at grips with the great problem of change, a problem which has always presented difficulty to any form of monism. If "all is one," the appearance of change demands explanation, in the same way as, if "all is change," it is the task of the philosopher to account for the appearance of unity. Early Greek monism was content to dismiss change as illusion. Spinoza's view is that change is real, but that it takes place *within* the universe only; the universe *sa a whole* does *not* change. How change within an unchanging whole is possible is explained in the conception of the "face of the whole universe," and to understand what Spinoza means by that we must follow his own reference in the passage quoted (Ep. 64) to the short statement of physical principles inserted between the thirteenth and fourteenth propositions of the second part of the *Ethics*. They are worth quoting, at least in part (the demonstrations are in every case omitted).

"Lemma I. Bodies differ from one another in respect of motion and rest, quickness and slowness, and not in respect of substance.

"II. All bodies agree in some respects.

"III. A body in motion or at rest must be determined to motion or rest by another body, which was also determined to motion or rest by another, and that in its turn by another, and so on *ad infinitum*. . . .

"DEFINITION. When a number of bodies of the same or of different magnitudes are pressed together by others in such a way that they lie one upon the other, or if they are in motion with the same or with different degrees of speed in such a way that they communicate their motion to one another in a certain fixed proportion, then these bodies are said to be mutually united and, when taken altogether, to constitute one body or individual thing distinct by reason of this union from other individual things. . . .

"LEMMA IV. If a certain number of bodies be separated from the body or individual thing which is composed of a number of bodies, and if their place be supplied by the same number of other bodies of the same nature, the individual thing will retain the nature which it had before without any change of its form.

"V. If the parts composing an individual thing become greater or less, but remain in the same proportion to one another as before in such a manner that they preserve towards one another the same ratio of motion and rest, the individual will also retain the nature which it had before without any change of form.

"VI. If any number of bodies composing an individual are compelled to divert the motion which they previously had in one direction into another, but in such a way that they are able to continue and reciprocally communicate their motions in the same manner as before, then the individual will still retain its nature without any change of form.

"VII. The individual thus composed will, moreover, retain its nature whether it move as a whole or be at rest, or whether it move in this direction or in that, provided

that each part retain its own motion and communicate it as before to the rest."

Then follows the all-important Scholium to which the preceding is an introduction :—

"SCHOLIUM. In this way we see how a composite individual can be affected in many ways and yet retain its nature. We have so far considered an individual which is made up entirely of bodies distinguished from one another by nothing but motion and rest, speed and slowness, that is to say, an individual which is composed of the most simple bodies. If we now consider an individual of another kind, one composed of many individuals of diverse natures, we shall see that it may be affected in many other ways, and yet preserve its nature. For since each of its parts is composed of a number of bodies, each one of them (by the preceding Lemma), without any change of its nature, can move more slowly or more quickly, and consequently can communicate its motion more quickly or more slowly to the rest. If we now imagine a third kind of individual made up of individuals of this second kind, we shall discover that it can be affected in many other ways without change of its form. In this way, if we go on *ad infinitum*, we may easily conceive the whole of nature to be one individual, the parts of which (that is to say, all bodies) change in infinite ways without any change of the whole individual. . . ."

We have here a doctrine of the composition of bodies, beginning with the most elementary (*corpora simplicissima*) and ending with the most complex, the totality of nature (*tota natura* as *unum individuum*). The most simple bodies, differing from one another not in virtue of their substance but of their "motion-and-rest," impinge on one another, and in certain mechanical ways communicate their motions to one another. An assemblage of such simple objects which have achieved a balance of motion-

and-rest is what we generally call a body, that is, an individual, acting as (relatively) one whole, distinguished from other individuals. But these composite bodies in a similar manner make up larger and larger wholes, until at last the limit is reached in the totality of nature which is made up of all the innumerable subordinate systems. This scheme, which Spinoza agrees is not worked out as fully as it would have to be if the point at issue were one of empirical science, shows how a monistic doctrine is quite compatible with the existence of the finite. Particularity is not obliterated; it is seen to be an essential element in the whole: while the facts of change far from being denied are in a sense emphasised.

For, to a transcendentalist philosophy, matter is intrinsically inert. The world has to be pushed from without, as Spinoza says,[1] in order to be set going. To the immanentist, however, there is no such thing as dead matter. *Natura naturans* is one with *natura naturata*. Nature is living, creative. Activity springs out of its very heart. "It is as impossible for us to conceive of God as not acting as to conceive of him as not existing" (Eth. II, 3 sch.). God is an *internal* cause,[2] as Spinoza replied to Tschirnhaus, who had asked him how the indivisible immutable Extension can give rise to the "great variety of things." Motion is 'internal' to matter. A recent gloss (A. Wolf, in *Proceedings of Aristotelian Society*, 1926–7, p. 186) has identified Spinoza's Extension with the physical energy which makes possible the 'energy of motion' and 'energy of position,' which Spinoza (with the physicists of his time) called motion and rest, and which we call 'kinetic' and 'potential' energy. The gloss is difficult to harmonise with certain

[1] Ep. 81; *cf.* K.V. I, c. 2 (G. p. 26, l. 33 ff.; W. p. 30, l. 18 f.).
[2] Ep. 60, p. 271; *cf.* K.V. II, c. 26 (G. p. 111, l. 18; W. p. 146, l. 27).

other elements in Spinoza's philosophy,[1] but it fits in suggestively with his specific statements on the question itself. "We have to remark," he says, "that the modifications of Substance which are seen to depend necessarily on Extension, such as motion and rest, must be attributed to this attribute. For if the power to produce these did not exist in Nature, then (even though Nature might have many other attributes) it would be impossible that these should exist; for, if a thing is to produce something, there must be that in it through which it, rather than another, can produce that something" (K.V. II, c. 19). The primary character of matter is that it is extended, but Extension must be such as to generate movement. Motion is not imposed upon it; it is itself the living source of endless motion. It is not "quiescent," waiting to be "stirred up by an external cause" (Ep. 81). It is quick, pregnant with the life of the world.

The idea that the totality of things may be expressed proximately in terms of motion just as ultimately it is to be expressed in terms of Extension, is a singularly fruitful one. All things, so far as they have a physical existence, are subject to physical laws. The idea is not Spinoza's own; it is common to the whole movement heralded by Kepler and completed by Newton: but in him we find it coupled with the determination to rid it of the dualism from which it had suffered at the hands of previous thinkers through their treatment of matter as a dead mass. And we must note one further point of even greater importance. To Spinoza the mechanistic account of things, although valid, is not complete. It is true within its sphere, naturally and inevitably, because all things are held within the attribute of Extension through

[1] See Dawes Hicks in *Nature* (March 5th, 1927), p. 359. It should be remarked that there is a broad cleavage between the "dynamic" and "static" interpretations of Spinoza, represented in the standard histories of philosophy by Kuno Fischer and Windelband respectively.

the medium of motion-and-rest. But although true within its sphere, it is not the whole truth; it is not, that is, the truth about the whole. The universe is not only Extension; it is also Thought: it is not only matter; it is mind as well. Mind, too, is an essential factor in the universe which is not comprised of matter alone; and since Reality is not exhausted by matter, 'materialism' as an ultimate philosophy is untenable.

Leaving now the 'infinite' modes—the most general features of *natura naturata*[1]—we may turn to the finite modes, that is, particular things. They present three important characteristics. They form a closed system; they are reproduced within each attribute; and they all "actively persist in their own essence."

These three points are correlative to the characteristics of the whole in which, as modes, they inhere.

Natura naturans is self-determining, hence *natura naturata* is determined. The constituent parts of the system, because they are integral to the system, have their place set for them. The internal economy of the whole is fixed. Thus Spinoza is led to a thorough and complete determinism. The eternal nature of the divine essence, the unique substance, *Deus sive Natura*, is revealed in the chains of causality binding the modes together. "In the eternal there is no 'when' or 'before' or 'after'" (Eth. I, 33 sch.). The world proceeds from God in the same timeless manner as the properties of a triangle proceed from the character of the triangle, and there is no more sense in saying that the world proceeds from a cause in time than in saying that the triangle is a cause in time of its three angles being

[1] We have dealt only with those under the attribute of Extension. The higher modes exist, of course, in the other attributes too, but the detail is obscure. For a recent study see Huan: *Le Dieu de Spinoza* (Paris, 1914).

equal to two right angles. Yet the timeless flow or procession of the world from God reveals itself to us as the temporal process. The human mind, as he says,[1] cannot see all things together, cannot grasp the whole at once. It is forced, therefore, to take it in bit by bit, and the successions so generated are the orders of time and causality. Causal and temporal sequences bind everything together, and their power is the power of God. "A thing which has been determined to any action was necessarily so determined by God and cannot render itself indeterminate; while that which has not been thus determined by God cannot determine itself" (Eth. I, 26–7).

At the bottom, therefore, of Spinoza's conception of the world is the notion of order, harmony and fitness. Not our orders, our harmonies, our ideas of fitness. "What seems to us in nature to be ridiculous, absurd or bad arises from the fact that we know things only partially, and that we are for the most part ignorant of the order and coherence of the whole of nature" (Pol. c. 2, § 8= Th.P. c. 16, p. 177, l. 4 ff.). The order of the whole of nature is objective, not dependent on our prejudices and fears. It is the ultimate structure of things, the way in which they fit together in the infinite intellect of God. In part this can be discovered. It is, at any rate, the ideal for discovery. And that is why, as Spinoza says with reference to the scientists of his own day,[2] we must obey nature rather than expect nature to obey us. There is no such thing as the "possible." "Nothing is called contingent except in respect of a defect in our knowledge."[3] A thing either is or is not,

[1] D.I.E. p. 389, l. 12; *cf.* p. 360, l. 18. For the *a priori* character of God's knowledge, see K.V. II, c. 5 (G. p. 64, l. 31 ff.; W. p. 81, l. 8 ff.); Eth. I, 17 sch. and 33 sch. 2; and for "time, measure and number" as "aids to imagination" only and not as real entities, Ep. 12.

[2] *e.g.* Ep. 13, p. 67, ll. 9–10; *cf.* Ep. 52, p. 244, ll. 13–4.

[3] Eth. I, 33 sch. 1; *cf.* D.I.E. p. 372, l. 1 f. and C.M. I, c. 3.

and it is what it is in virtue of what all other things in their systematic interconnexion are.

We have seen already how closely Spinoza pursues this point. The immutability of God means for him the immutability of nature; the wisdom of God, the laws of nature; the goodness of God, the harmony and internal fitness (the 'concatenation') of nature. All the fervour of religion has been poured into a scientific necessitarianism for which causality is the stamp of God. How far the position is metaphysically valid is a question which cannot be discussed here. But the universal 'reign of law' has seldom been propounded with such conviction, nor its implications so boldly followed out.

We come now to the second great characteristic of all modes.

Reality, we learned earlier, is expressed primarily in attributes, and since each of the attributes expresses in its own way the whole of reality, every mode must appear independently within each of them. "Thinking substance and extended substance are one and the same substance, comprehended now under this attribute, now under that. So a mode of Extension and the idea of that mode are one and the same thing expressed in two different ways—a truth which some of the Hebrews appear to have seen as if through a cloud, since they say that God, the intellect of God, and the things which are the objects of that intellect, are one and the same. For example, the circle existing in nature and the idea that is in God of an existing circle are one and the same thing manifested in different attributes; and therefore, whether we think of nature under the attribute of Extension or under the attribute of Thought or under any other attribute whatever, we shall discover one and the same order or one and the same connexion of causes, that is to say, in every case the same sequence of things. . . . So that so long

as things are considered as modes of Thought, we must explain the order of the whole of nature or the connexion of causes by the attribute of Thought alone, and so far as they are considered as modes of Extension, the order of the whole of nature must be explained through the attribute of Extension alone; and so with other attributes" (Eth. II, 7 sch.). The real and its modifications appear, then, *either* as extended *or* as thought (we may limit the discussion to the two attributes we know). The two expressions do not interfere with one another. They are mutually exclusive. You can take the modes *either* on the physical side *or* on the mental side, but you cannot move from one to the other. In each separate attribute there is a distinct and separate expression of the one "order and connexion" within Substance, and so "the order and connexion of ideas is the same as the order and connexion of things" (Eth. II, 7).

Now when as a rule we speak of physical and mental, we are thinking only of the *human* mind and body. Spinoza, following the universalistic tenor of his philosophy, thinks of the whole of nature. Everything has a mental side, that is to say, everything has something corresponding to that which in ourselves we call mind. To say that we or other things have minds is, however, inaccurate. There are minds and there are bodies, co-ordinate manifestations, within different attributes, of reticulations in the one substance. But there is no more truth in saying that the mind has the body than in saying that the body has the mind. They are both expressions of one reality. "On this principle we not only understand that the human mind is united to the body, but also what is to be understood by the union of the mind and body. But no one can understand this adequately or distinctly without first knowing adequately the nature of our body; for what we have proved hitherto is altogether general and refers no more to man than to other individual things,

all of which are, although in different degrees, animate. For of everything there necessarily exists in God an idea of which God is the cause, in the same way as the idea of the human body exists in him; and therefore everything that we have said of the idea of the human body is necessarily true of the idea of any other thing" (Eth. II, 13 sch.). Spinoza goes on to say that, of course, there are different degrees of mind: "We cannot deny that ideas, like objects themselves, differ from one another and that one is more excellent and contains more reality than another, just as the object of one idea is more excellent and contains more reality than another" (*Ib.*). There are, we might say, some minds and bodies more elementary, some more complex, than others; and the human body and mind may be beyond comparison superior to other forms. But that does not affect the main position. It is true that our own interest lies with man and his mind and body. Yet man is not unique. He does not stand alone in nature apart from other things. His most treasured characteristics are only special cases of what exists universally.

This is seen still more clearly in the third general character of modes, their "tendency to persist in their own essence," or, to use a phrase of Bosanquet's, their 'determinate self-maintenance.' The divine activity is immanent in the universe, and hence the constituent parts of the universe are active. Both their essence and existence flow from the divine power, and in the world of time this eternal fact takes the form of a temporal striving. What Spinoza calls the 'general' and the 'special' Providence are one and the same: "The second proprium of God is his Providence, which to us is nothing else than the striving which we find in the whole of nature and in individual things to maintain and preserve their existence. For it is manifest that no thing could, through its own

nature, seek its own annihilation, but on the contrary that everything has in itself a striving to preserve its condition and to improve itself. Following these definitions of ours we therefore posit a *general* and a *special* Providence. The *general* Providence is that through which all things are produced and sustained in so far as they are parts of the whole of nature. The *special* Providence is the striving of each thing separately to preserve its existence, each thing, that is to say, not as a part of nature, but as a whole by itself." [1] Things are not only what they are: they strive to continue in their being. They are urged on, or rather they urge themselves on, since they are the embodiment, however fragmentary, of the *actuosa essentia* (C.M. II, c. 11, end) of God. "Individual things are modes by which the attributes of God are expressed in a certain and determinate manner; that is to say, they are things which express in a certain and determinate manner the power of God whereby God exists and acts" (Eth. III, 6 dem.).

Now this characteristic of the modes, like the others, is absolutely general and holds necessarily of all things. Human life is only one example of it (already in C.M. II, c. 6, last paragraph). "For Nature is always the same and everywhere one. Its virtue is the same, and its power of acting, that is to say, its laws and rules according to which all things exist and are changed from form to form, are everywhere and always the same; so that there must also be one and the same method of understanding the nature of all things whatsoever" (Eth. III, Pref.).

The general scene has now been set. Only one last point need be remarked upon before we proceed to the special application. The levels or grades of being which

[1] K.V. I, c. 5; *cf.* Th.P. c. 3, p. 31, l. 32 ff. on the 'internal' and 'external' help of God.

we have traced from God to attribute, from attribute to infinite modes, and from infinite to finite modes, are continued, though in a less striking way, through the finite modes as well. Each one is what it is within the fixed system of which it is a part; yet, as in any system, some parts are more, some less, significant, that is, more or less representative of the character of the whole. A mouse, as Spinoza remarks in a letter (Ep. 23, quoted below, p. 190), is a mouse, and an angel an angel. Our potentialities are clearly determined by our essence. Yet "if I say I can do what I like with this table, I do not mean that I can make it eat grass" (Pol. c. 4, § 4). The table, like the mouse, has its nature fixed for it. It has its 'value,' but the value of a table. Now Spinoza seems to have held that certain things are, as a fact, nearer, as it were, to God than others; they express, or participate in, his nature more fully. The bearing of this point we shall see later in his theory of conduct. Here we need only note it in its broad aspect. As a fact, it is universal, holding not only of the world of men, but of the whole modal system as such.

III

HUMAN BEINGS AS PARTS OF NATURE

HUMAN beings, like everything else within the system of nature, are modes, and partake of the character of modes: they are co-ordinated with one another and are subject to determination; their unity has a variety of expression under the various attributes; they strive to persist in their own essence. On the basis of these fundamental facts shared by man with the rest of nature Spinoza erects his account of human conduct. Before, however, coming to this we must see the application of the general doctrine, and endeavour to understand what sort of being man is when conceived of as a Spinozistic mode.

(*A*)—THE HUMAN BODY

As a body the human being is of the same kind as any other body. Indeed, the whole theory of natural body (above, p. 80 ff.) is introduced into the *Ethics*, as Spinoza himself tells us, only in order to throw light on the nature of man. It is followed immediately by a number of postulates (inserted before II, 14) in which its results are applied to physiology. "The human body," they begin, "is composed of many individuals of different nature, each one of which is to a high degree composite." This means that the human body, like all other bodies, is a system of simpler elements maintained in a balance of motion-and-rest. "All and sundry particular things which are real have become such through motion and rest,

and this is true of all the modes of substantial Extension which we call bodies: the differences between them result solely from their different proportions of motion and rest. . . . From such a proportion of motion and rest comes also the existence of our body. . . . This body of ours had, however, a different proportion of motion and rest when it was an unborn embryo, and in due course when we are dead it will have a different proportion again" (K.V. II, pref. note, §§ 7–10). Birth and death are thus only incidents of the same sort of redistribution which is the fact behind the appearance of cosmic creation. Maintenance of the balance is for our personality all-important. In fact, it *is* our personality. It is our life both mental and physical. "The human body, though the circulation of the blood and the other things by means of which it is thought to live be preserved, may, nevertheless, be changed into another nature altogether different from its own. No reason compels me to affirm that the body never dies unless it is changed into a corpse. Experience, indeed, seems to teach the contrary. It happens sometimes that a man undergoes such changes that he cannot very well be said to be the same man, as was the case with a certain Spanish poet of whom I have heard, who was seized with an illness, and although he recovered from it, remained nevertheless so oblivious of his past life that he did not believe that the dramas and tragedies he had composed were his own, and might, indeed, have been taken for a grown-up child if he had forgotten his native tongue as well. But if this seems incredible, what shall we say of children? The man of mature years believes the nature of children to be so different from his own that it would be impossible to persuade him that he had ever been a child if he did not judge of himself on the analogy of others' (Eth. IV, 39 sch.). What recent writers have called 'alternations' and 'dissociations' of personality are thus explicitly

noted by Spinoza, on whose principles they are explained as the consequences of a disturbance in the balance of the mode which in the attribute of Extension is the human body and in the attribute of Thought the human mind. They are half-way, as it were, between the stability which is the state of normal life and the violent and irremediable disruption which is death.

Now the human body, like everything else, is not only itself a system of subordinate parts held together by a certain proportion of motion-and-rest. It is itself, again like everything else, a subordinate part in the system of the whole of nature. Some correspondence of Spinoza with Oldenburg is so illuminating on the conception that we may quote a part of it (following Prof. Joachim's slightly condensed version in his *Study of the Ethics of Spinoza*, p. 80 ff.) by way of summary exposition of the way in which Spinoza conceived of the modal world and of the place of man within it.

" A month or two before, Spinoza [Ep. 30], in referring to the miseries of the war between England and Holland, had observed to Oldenburg that he had learnt to study human nature in all these troubles without applying praise or blame, without either laughing or weeping at men's follies. He had reflected that man, like everything else, was but a part of Nature ; that we are ignorant as to the way in which each part is congruent with its whole, and all the parts cohere with one another ; and that this ignorance—and this alone—encourages the mistaken notion that there is 'good order' and 'confusion' in the universe. Because we see the world inadequately and in a mutilated view, some things appear to us useless, disordered and absurd. We first impose our limited notions of order and value, and then condemn what does not fit in with them. In response to an appeal from Oldenburg (Ep. 31), Spinoza (in Ep. 32) explains why he believes that each part of Nature is congruent with its

whole, and coheres with all the other parts of Nature within the Whole.

"First he reiterates his warning: there is no beauty nor ugliness, no good order nor confusion in Nature. It is our Imagination which finds things 'beautiful' or 'ugly,' 'well-ordered' or 'confused.' But there is all-pervading order in things in a different—non-teleological—sense. All things do, as a matter of fact, cohere, as modes, to form a single system within their Attributes; and we may distinguish parts and wholes—subordinate systems—within this totality, according to the degree of coherence exhibited; according to the internal congruence, or absence of friction, which forms a sort of natural grouping. 'I regard things as parts of a whole,' Spinoza says, 'so far as their natures reciprocally are congruent, thus producing an inner agreement so far as is possible; on the other hand, so far as things are discrepant with one another, each of them forms a distinct idea of itself in our mind, and each therefore is regarded as a whole, and not as a part.' Thus, *e.g.* the constituent elements of the blood—lymph, chyle, etc., are regarded by us as its parts, simply because 'the motions of their particles so fit in with one another—in proportion with the respective magnitudes and figures of those particles—that they obviously combine together to form a single fluid. But so far as we regard the particles of lymph as discrepant in their figure and motion with the particles of chyle, we consider lymph and chyle each as a whole and not as a part.

"'Now, suppose a worm living in the blood endowed with *sight* to discriminate the particles of lymph, chyle, etc., and with *reason* to observe how each particle rebounds from the impact of another, or communicates a part of its motion to the other, etc. The life of such a worm in the blood would correspond to our life in this part of the universe. Each particle of the blood would

be to it a whole, and not a part ; and it could not know how all the parts were regulated by the general nature of the blood, and forced to accommodate themselves to a mutual congruence on a definite proportion as that nature demands. For, if we suppose ' (in order to make the analogy complete) ' the blood to present the nature of a closed system, clearly its general state would persist for ever, and its particles would undergo no variations, except such as could be explained as the consequents of the nature of the blood alone, *i.e.* from the proportion of the motions of the lymph, chyle, etc., to one another ; and so the blood ' (which the worm cannot conceive as a single whole) ' would be in reality a whole always, and never a part.

" ' But, as a matter of fact, the blood is not a closed or self-dependent system. There are very many other external causes which modify the laws of its nature (and which are in turn modified by it) ; hence other motions and variations arise in the blood, *i.e.* motions, which are not the consequents solely of the proportion of the motions of its parts to one another, but of the proportion of the motion of the blood as a whole to the motions of the external causes. And therefore the blood gets the position of a part, and not a whole.

" ' Now all the bodies of Nature ought to be considered in a similar way. For all of them are surrounded by other bodies, and all are reciprocally determined to exist and work in a certain and determinable manner, viz. so that in the whole universe the same proportion of motion to rest is always maintained. Hence it follows (i) that every body—*taken as a particular thing existing here and now*—is a part of the whole universe, is congruent with the whole, and coherent with all the other parts of the whole ; (ii) that—since the nature of the universe is not, like that of the blood, limited, but absolutely infinite—the changes of the parts of the universe, which can

follow from this its infinite (nature, or) power, must be infinite.

" ' But, if we regard each body in its relations to its Attribute, as regards its substantial nature, then each part has a still more intimate union with its whole. For ' (*cf.* Ep. 4, to which Spinoza refers) ' since Substance is essentially complete, each part of the whole corporeal Substance belongs to the whole Substance, and can neither be nor be conceived apart from the rest of that Substance.

" ' That is why I hold the human body to be a part of the universe ; and as regards the human mind, that, too, I conceive as a part of the universe. For I maintain that there is given in the Nature of Things an infinite power of Thinking, which, *qua* infinite, comprehends in itself ideally the whole of Nature—its thoughts proceeding in the same manner as Nature itself, its *ideatum*. And I hold the human mind to be this same power (not *qua* infinite and perceiving the whole of Nature, but) *qua* finite, *i.e.* so far as it perceives only the human body ; and it is in this sense that I conceive the human mind to be a part of a certain infinite intelligence. . . .' "

This passage corrects in some ways the purely mechanical account offered by Spinoza in his excursus on physics in the *Ethics* (above, p. 80 ff.). It is no more true that the whole is the mere sum of its parts than that a living body could be created by an addition of the items of an anatomist's list. The infinite is not the sum of finites. The finite is a limitation of the infinite[1]. This conception, which Spinoza shares with other great thinkers of the seventeenth century, goes far to make intelligible his account of human personality. But to understand that we must first see what he has to say about the human mind.

[1] Cf. below, p. 155.

(*B*)—The Human Mind

There are, to speak very broadly, two generally recognised types of views regarding the human mind, views which historically connect themselves with the two great traditions of Platonism and Aristotelianism. To Plato, the body is the temporary prison-house of the soul, the bars of which are broken with death. Soul is thus a self-dependent entity with a self-contained history of which its residence on earth is only an incident. To Aristotle, soul is the form of which body is the matter. Body and soul are therefore as indistinguishable (except logically) as any other such partners, and in the ordinary course (though Aristotle concedes somewhat mysteriously that 'intellect' is immortal) persist and perish as one. Now Spinoza's doctrine resembles and owes much to the Aristotelian view. Everything, as we have seen, has 'mind' or a 'mental' side, and the bodily and mental are intimately involved with one another. Yet Spinoza's doctrine is in a sense Platonic too. Soul has its own self-contained life. The order and connexion of ideas, although the same as the order and connexion of the physical counterpart, is distinct and independent of it.

Body and soul, then, mind and matter, do not, according to Spinoza, have any influence of any sort on one another. It is not that they each go their own way—that would be completely to misunderstand the theory; not even, as in so much of the modern psychological theory built on Spinoza's thought, that they are 'parallel' with one another. Soul is *one* manifestation of that of which *another* manifestation is body. Soul and body, then, are really one and the same. Soul is the mental aspect of that same modification of Substance which, under the attribute of Extension, is 'its' body. Body is the

physical aspect of that same modification of Substance which, under the attribute of Thought, is 'its' soul.

The hypothesis (the so-called 'identity hypothesis' of mind and body) may seem strange, but it materially assisted psychology in becoming a science. It removed at a blow all sorts of ambiguous elements which previous thinkers had admitted (or allowed to remain) in the idea of the soul. But it may be asked, what of the fact of interaction itself? Does not the mind as a fact exert influence on body, and for that matter—though this is often forgotten—does not body exert influence on mind? Are the two series, then, as Spinoza's doctrine would insist, complete in themselves and so independent of one another? Spinoza's statement on the point is vigorous: "Mind and Body are one and the same thing conceived now under the attribute of Thought, now under that of Extension. For this reason the order or concatenation of things is the same under whatever attribute Nature is conceived, and consequently the order of the actions and passions of our body is simultaneous with the order of the actions and passions of the mind.

"Although the facts are so obviously as I have stated them as to leave no room for doubt, I hardly believe that, without a proof derived from experience, men will be induced to weigh them calmly; so firmly are they persuaded that the body moves or remains at rest solely at the bidding of the mind, and does a number of things which depend upon the will of the mind alone and the craft of thought. Yet no one has hitherto determined what the body can do by itself; that is to say, experience has taught no one hitherto what the body can do and what it cannot do without being determined by the mind at all but acting from the laws of corporeal nature alone. For no one as yet has understood the structure of the body so accurately as to be able to explain all its functions, not to mention the fact that many things are

observed in animals which far surpass human sagacity, and that sleep-walkers in their sleep do very many things which they would not dare to do when awake; all this shows clearly that the body can of itself do many things from the laws of its own nature alone at which its mind is amazed. Again, nobody knows by what means or by what method the mind moves the body, nor how many degrees of motion it can communicate to the body, nor with what speed it can move the body. So that it follows that when men say that this or that action of the body springs from the mind which has command over the body, they do not know what they say and only confess with pretentious words that they do not understand what the cause of the action was and see nothing in it to wonder at.

"But they will say that whether they know or do not know by what means the mind moves the body, it is, nevertheless, in their experience that if the mind were not fit for thinking the body would be inert, and that it is in their experience that it rests with the mind alone whether they speak or are silent, and so with many other things which for this reason they think to be dependent on a decree of the mind.

"But with regard to the first assertion, I ask them whether experience does not also show that, if it is the body which is inert, then the mind is unfit at the same time for thinking? When the body is asleep, the mind slumbers with it, and has not the power of thought which it has when the body is awake. Again, I believe that all have discovered that the mind is not always equally fitted for thinking about the same subject, but will be better fitted for the contemplation of this or that object in proportion to the fitness of the body for this or that image to be excited in it. My opponents will say that it is impossible to deduce the causes of architecture, painting, and other products of human art, from the laws of the

merely corporeal, and that the human body, unless it were determined and guided by the mind, would not be able to build a temple. I have already shown, however, that they do not know what the body can do nor what can be deduced from the consideration of its nature alone, and that they find that many things are done in a purely natural way which they would never have believed possible without the direction of the mind, as, for example, those things which sleep-walkers do in their sleep and at which they themselves are astonished when they wake. I adduce also here the structure itself of the human body, which in workmanship surpasses by far all the products of human art ; not to mention what I have already proved, that an infinitude of things follows from nature under whatever attribute it may be considered.

" With regard to the second point, I should say that human affairs would be much more happily conducted if it were true that it is equally in the power of men to be silent and to speak. But common experience is more than enough to prove that there is nothing over which men have less power than the tongue, and that there is nothing which they are less able to do than to govern their appetites. . . . A baby believes that it seeks the breast, an angry boy that he thirsts for vengeance, a timid man that he seeks flight, of their own free will. A drunkard believes that it is by a free command of his mind that he speaks the things which when sober he wishes he had left unsaid. So a madman, a chatterer, a boy, and others of the same kind, all believe that they speak by a free command of the mind, whilst, in truth, they have no power to restrain the impulse which they have to speak.

" Experience itself, then, no less than reason, clearly teaches that men believe themselves to be free simply because they are conscious of their own actions, but know nothing of the causes by which they are determined to them " (Eth. III, 2 sch.).

Mind, then, does not act on body nor body on mind. Both are concurrent expressions of one determined series bound by causal laws. Little remains to be said after Spinoza's argumentation. He certainly makes out a good case for his point of view. Yet there is a further consideration, one which, owing to more recent developments in thought, interests modern students more than it did the age of Spinoza. The whole movement which has its centre in Kant has concentrated attention on the activity of the mind in knowing, and has declared mind to be supreme and unique in nature by virtue of its cognitive powers. Now Spinoza, who held that mind is a universal, not a specifically human, phenomenon, could clearly not have put forward such a view. Yet he does hold mind in high honour and does offer an account of knowledge. Further, as we saw earlier (above, p. 26), he was fully alive to the so-called 'critical' problem, and indeed planned an early, perhaps his very earliest, work to meet it. Yet in the *Ethics* it falls into a secondary place. The *Ethics* starts with an ontology, an account of being, not an epistemology, a theory of knowledge. And, characteristically enough, when the theory of knowledge does come up for consideration, it is treated in a thoroughly objectivist manner.

It is an elementary fact of physics that bodies are modified by contact with one another. This would mean, on Spinoza's theory, that reality as a whole is modified in a certain manner, and the modification as it is expressed in the physical world would be accompanied by a concurrent expression in the mental world. "The order and connexion of the ideas" corresponds exactly with "the order and connexion of the things." Now the mind of a body is the manifestation under the attribute of Thought of the mode which, under the attribute of Extension, is that body. It would follow that any modification of a body is accompanied by a

modification of 'its' mind. This accompanying mental modification is knowledge:

Immediate knowledge is confined, therefore, to the states of one's own body. But the states of one's own body are the consequences for the most part of the activities of other bodies. In so far, therefore, as we can interpret the traces of these activities which are left in our own body, we have indirect knowledge of their causes, that is, of other bodies. Now it is obvious that our sole data for interpretation, the traces which are left in ourselves, depend as much upon the constitution of our own bodies as recipients as upon that of other bodies as agents. It follows that our knowledge of things external to ourselves depends on and reveals our own nature rather than that of the external things (Eth. II, 16 cor. 2).

It is at this point that the close connexion between Spinoza's theory of knowledge and his theory of conduct becomes first apparent. Knowledge is not something extraneous to ourselves, something added from without. It is not a collection of items of information introduced into an "empty cabinet" (to use a phrase of Locke's) which is indifferent to its contents. Knowledge is a spiritual state. What we are depends on what we know. But since how we act depends on what we are, what we know and how we act—our knowledge and our characters —are intertwined. The type of life lived by man, according to Spinoza, varies in accordance with his knowledge. There are higher stages of knowledge, derived from more universal and hence more concrete kinds of experience, and corresponding with them are higher and more concrete types of life, leading up to the supreme fulfilment in the knowledge and love of God. The *Ethics*, as is brought out powerfully in M. Brunschvicg's volume on Spinoza, exhibits a kind of moral dialectic. The good and the true advance hand in hand.

Before, however, seeing what these types of life and

knowledge are, we must turn to Spinoza's account of the mechanism of human behaviour; since, as he himself remarks (Eth. III, Pref.), "it is of very little use to write fine things about the way in which men ought to live without first determining the nature and strength of the emotions." Now just as his account of the human body takes up the first character of all modes, their close co-ordination within a determined system, and that of the human mind the second, the dual expression of all reality within the mutually exclusive attributes of Thought and Extension, so now the basis of human behaviour is seen to be the third universal characteristic of all modes, their 'determinate self-maintenance' or tendency to persist as they are.

(*C*)—Human Behaviour

The primary fact about man, as about everything else, is his *conatus*, his striving to persist in his own essence. He has an *appetitus*, a 'will-to-be,' which, as accompanied in man by self-consciousness, Spinoza prefers to call *cupiditas* or 'desire.' *Cupiditas* is the most general word Spinoza can find to include "all the striving of human nature which we call by the name of appetite, will, desire or impulse" (Eth. III, Appendix, Affect. Def. 1). It is man as active.

Now when the human body is brought into contact with other bodies two sorts of results follow, or rather one result follows which on analysis breaks itself up into two. Its state is modified, and what we take for knowledge of the external thing, but which (according to Spinoza's view, as we have just seen) is knowledge rather of the constitution and changes of our own body than of the nature of the external body, comes into being. But apart from this consciousness of the modifications of our

body we have, according to Spinoza, an immediate feeling of its tone. This immediate feeling, which he also calls by the name of *idea*,[1] is to all intents and purposes what we should now call an emotion. An emotion, therefore, is an immediate feeling of the state of our own body. It is the awareness of the increase or decrease of our general vital energy. Our "power of existence," in Spinoza's phrase, rises and falls, and of this rise and fall we have an index in the emotions.

How close this account is to certain well-known modern theories on the subject it is hardly necessary to point out. We now realise as never before the intimate physical affinities of our deepest feelings. Commentators on the *Ethics* have long pointed out the obscurities attaching to Spinoza's use of the one word "idea" to signify both immediate feeling and reflective knowledge. But the use implies a central truth. Our emotional and intellectual natures are not distinct from one another, and both are intimately allied with our bodies. Indeed, Spinoza's own final aim is to show how, since "the value of ideas and the actual power of thought are measured by the value of their object" (Eth. III, App., end), the objects with which our bodies come into contact can be widened until, when brought to the most comprehensive and real of all, we are lifted into a state which is intellectual and emotional at once, that of the "*intellectual love* of God." But before he does this he uses his fundamental conception in order to display the objective structure of the emotional world.

When the human body is brought into contact with other bodies, its power of action is sometimes increased, sometimes decreased. The awareness of an increase, its

[1] *Idea* is the name given to the psychical manifestation, *affectio* to the physical; *affectus*, Spinoza's most usual word, comprehends both. 'Emotion' seems the natural equivalent, but it is a narrower term than *affectus*, and is sometimes awkward. I have in some cases, therefore, used 'feeling' instead.

immediate perception, is *lætitia* (joy), that of a decrease is *tristitia* (sorrow). These are the elementary feelings of pleasure and pain. Pleasure is the sense of expanded, pain of thwarted, power; and the power of man, as of anything else, is just the essence in which he strives to persist, the *conatus* (as represented in consciousness by *cupiditas*) at any given stage. In these three we have, according to Spinoza, the primary factors of our emotional life: first *cupiditas*, the "essence itself of man in so far as it is conceived as determined to any action by any particular modification of itself"; then *lætitia*, the "transition from a less to a greater perfection"; then *tristitia*, the "transition from a greater perfection to a less" (Eth. III, App., Aff. Def. 1–3).

These primary emotions run through and compose all others, but in varying degrees of distance and complication. We endeavour, for example, both in imagination and in reality, to keep before ourselves what will increase our power of action, avoid or remove what will decrease it. Now since love is "nothing but pleasure accompanied by the idea of an external cause, hatred just pain with the accompanying idea of an external cause," it follows that "he who loves a thing necessarily endeavours to keep it before him and preserve it; he who hates a thing necessarily endeavours to remove and destroy it" (III, 13 sch.). We see, therefore, that emotions are primarily concerned with, and are called out by, definite objects and situations, and that they are so called out inevitably and as a fact of nature. But they are not only excited by their appropriate objects. They also tend to become associated with one another through their objects, so that the appearance of one object brings up not only its own appropriate emotion, but also that which is usually called up by the other. And not only have we to reckon with this 'association' of emotions with one another (which often makes us "love or hate certain things from no

cause which is known to us," III, 15 sch.). Emotions imitate one another: "Although we may not have been moved towards a thing by any emotion, yet if that thing is like ourselves, whenever we imagine it to be affected by any emotion we are ourselves affected by the same" (III, 27). Finally, to mention the last item of the mechanism involved in the construction of our emotional life, we are ignorant, and are therefore subject to uncertainty; we are creatures of time, and live in hope and fear.

Spinoza's weaving together of the strands of desire, pleasure and pain, under the conditions of association and imitation and coloured by ignorance and doubt, can only be appreciated in his own words. He himself summarised his doctrine in the Appendix to the third book of the *Ethics*, to which the reader should refer. Detail apart, however, there is a general point in it which is worthy of special attention.

"It will doubtless seem a marvellous thing," he writes in the introduction to *Ethics* III, "that I should endeavour to treat the vices and follies of humankind in the geometrical manner, and should seek to demonstrate by accurate method things which people cry out against as being opposed to reason, or as being idle, absurd or monstrous. But this is my reason. Nothing happens in nature which can be attributed to any flaw of nature. . . . Considered in themselves, the emotions of hatred, anger, envy follow from the same necessity and excellence of nature as does everything else; they have therefore their definite causes through which they are to be understood, and they have their definite properties which are just as worthy of our knowledge as are the properties of any other thing in the mere contemplation of which we find pleasure. I shall, therefore, treat the nature and strength of the emotions and the power of the mind over them by the same method as that by which I treated previously of God and the mind, and I shall consider human

actions and appetites just as if I were considering lines planes, or bodies."

The meaning of this claim has been discussed before (above, p. 38). Spinoza does not say that human actions and appetites *are* "lines, planes and bodies," but that they should be studied as dispassionately as are "lines, planes and bodies"; moral problems are to be subject to the same objectivity of treatment as any other sort of problem. Spinoza is pleading for an impartial investigation of the moral life, an investigation which shall be as independent of our personal interest and desires as is our account of the properties of geometrical figures. The favourite mathematical analogy need not mislead us. As we have seen, Spinoza may have over-rated the objectivity of mathematics. Yet apart from this, and apart from the detail of Spinoza's own account, there is no doubt that the end at which he aimed is the full-grown demand of the scientific mind. As he says elsewhere (Eth. IV, 57 sch., end): "Surely the emotions of humankind manifest the power and artifice of nature at least no less than do many other things which we wonder at and in the contemplation of which we find pleasure." Human beings, he reminds a mechanistic age, are *also* interesting.

But Spinoza does not stop here. He not only demands for ethics a mathematical objectivity of treatment. He speaks here and elsewhere of "the *same* necessity" operating in the worlds of geometry and morals, as if it is only explanation of the type we have in geometry which is valid in any field. Such a position is not intrinsically absurd and could be defended (more easily perhaps by pointing out the weakness, than by insisting—wrongly—on the strength, of geometrical deduction),[1] but it goes beyond the evidence, and, indeed, is not demanded by Spinoza's own principles. We have seen already (above,

[1] See the author's *Science of Morals* (Benn, 1928).

p. 52 and p. 80 ff.) that his system depends on the conception of the integration and differentiation of nature. The universe is not a blank sameness all over; it teems with infinitely various things in infinitely diverse ways held together within ascending complexities of organisation. We may admit, then, as Spinoza writes in this very Preface (to *Ethics* III), that "the power of nature is everywhere the same," and yet deny, with Spinoza himself throughout, the sameness of its manifestations; but if the manifestations are not the same there is no intrinsic reason why we should demand that "the method of understanding all things whatsoever should be one and the same." The fact would seem to be that Spinoza was led astray by the mode of presentation which, for excellent reasons, he adopted. There are two elements striving for mastery within him. The one is that crystallised in the geometrical form in which he cast his thought, the other is the dynamic content of that thought itself; and while we may admire the one as an artistic achievement, it is the other which is the more profound and valuable. The two elements are never distinct; the form is always cramping the content. We have had one striking example of this already in Spinoza's attempt to express his doctrine of activity as the core of reality, within the forms of 'attribute' and 'mode.' We have now to see another in his geometrising of a conception of the will of man which is closely akin to that which we should now call the biological.

We must first dismiss a contemporary doctrine, which, long known in European thought, had been revived with great effect by Descartes. Descartes had taught that the mind of men contained two separate faculties, that of 'cognition,' the understanding, and that of 'election,' the will. The function of the understanding in the construction of knowledge was to apprehend ideas contained in the mind, that of the will to affirm or deny their validity.

But whereas the understanding was confined to the ideas presented to it, the will ranged freely beyond any such limit. It carried, therefore, its power of affirming and denying beyond the data actually present. This is the origin, according to Descartes, of error in the sphere of knowledge and of sin in the sphere of morals: "They arise from this alone, that, since the will is of much wider range than the understanding, I do not restrain it within the same limits, but extend it even to those things which I do not understand; and as the will is indifferent to them it easily turns aside from the true and the good and so I fall into error and sin" (*Meditations* IV [ed. Adam, p. 58, l. 20 ff.]; *cf. Principles*, I, 29 ff.).

Now Spinoza, like psychologists of our own day, rejected the conception of mind as made up of separate 'faculties.' Will and intellect are not specific entities at all. They are abstractions, universal terms like 'humanity,' and bear the same relation to individual acts of thought and volition as does 'humanity' to this and that individual man (Eth. II, 48 sch.). But Spinoza did not stop there. He not only affirmed that there is no such thing as 'will' apart from individual volitions. He asserted that the element in our judgments which Descartes had thought was a superadded element of will was in reality a function of the idea itself. Thoughts are not dead images, whether given or fabricated, to be recognised by one part of the mind and accepted or rejected by another. They are not "dumb things, like pictures on paper, but modes of thinking; that is to say, understanding itself (*ipsum intelligere*)" (II, 43 sch.). "The only affirmation and negation in the mind is that involved in the idea in so far as it is an idea" (II, 48 sch.). To think is, in fact, to judge, and to judge is to affirm—"conception," as he says in the explanation to the third definition of Book II, "is an activity of mind." The affirmation and activity of the judgment, therefore, is the self-affirmation and activity

of the ideas. " Truth is the standard of truth itself and of falsity " (II, 43 sch. and often) ; or, as Spinoza wrote in his early treatise on method, " there is something real in ideas (*in ideis dari aliquid reale*) through which true ideas are distinguished from false " (D.I.E. p. 378, l. 25). Ideas are, then, active essences with a spontaneity of their own and contain a principle of truth and expansion within themselves.

But if the will is not a separate faculty within the mind, what is it ? It is something of even greater importance. It is the whole of man considered as an active being. What we call will in man is in man what the *conatus* is universally. " This effort," he says, " when it is attributed to mind alone, is called will, but when to both mind and body, appetite (*appetitus*) ; which, then, is nothing but the very essence of man from the nature of which there necessarily follow those things which promote his preservation, and thus he is determined to do those things. Hence there is no difference between appetite and desire except in this particular, that desire is usually attributed to men in so far as they are conscious of their appetites, and it may therefore be defined as appetite of which we are conscious " (III, 9 sch.).

The terminology is of no particular consequence, and as a matter of fact Spinoza does not seem to have been very well satisfied with it himself. But the idea itself is of the first importance. Striving is primary. We are fundamentally conative. But (here paradox arises) our conations are predetermined, springing from out of our own constitutions and environment. " *There is no difference between appetite and desire except in this particular, that desire is generally attributed to men in so far as they are conscious of their appetites.*" Consciousness, then, makes no difference. We are conscious of our acts, in a phrase Spinoza repeats many times, but ignorant of their causes. Freedom is an illusion. " I call a thing free " (Spinoza is

explaining the point in a late letter), " if it exists and acts solely by the necessity of its own nature; constrained (*coactam*), if it is determined to exist, and to act in a certain determinate way, by something else. God, for example, exists necessarily and yet freely, because his existence is dependent entirely upon his own nature and nothing else. Thus God understands himself and all things freely, because it follows solely from the necessity of his nature that he should understand all things. You see, then, that I make freedom lie not in a free choice, but in free necessity.

" However, let us come down to created things, which are all determined to exist and act in a given determinate manner by external causes. To make the point clear, let us take a very simple example. A stone receives a certain quantity of motion from the action of an external cause, and, by virtue of it, continues to move after the action of the external cause has ceased. The continuance of the stone's motion is constrained, not because it is necessary, but because it must be defined by the impulse derived from an external cause. What is true of the stone is true of anything, however complicated its nature or varied its functions, inasmuch as each individual thing is necessarily determined to exist and act in a fixed and determinate manner by some external cause. Now suppose that the stone, while continuing in motion, should think, and be conscious that it is endeavouring, as far as it can, to continue in its motion. Such a stone, being conscious only of its own endeavour and being in no wise indifferent to its own activities, would believe itself to be completely free and would think that it continued in motion solely as the consequence of its own volition. Human freedom, which all boast that they possess, is of this kind. It consists solely in the fact that men are conscious of their desires, but are ignorant of the causes by which they are determined " (Ep. 58).

Human beings, then, like everything else and in spite of the fact of self-consciousness, work out *from* conditions which are already set, not *towards* ideals which are to be realised. In the words of the decisive definition (7) of Book IV : " By the end for the sake of which we do anything I understand appetite." What is appetite ? Blind impulse. We follow ends and ideals, but these ends and ideals are projected from behind us. " We do not strive for, wish, seek, or desire anything because we think it to be good. We judge a thing to be good because we strive for, wish, seek, or desire it " (Eth. III, 9 sch.).

We are here entering into the sphere of moral ideas ; we are no longer *merely* in that of mechanical happenings. The happenings are, of course, still mechanical ; whatever exists acts as it must. But the actions so performed are made the subjects of a judgment ; they are estimated in accordance with a standard of value. But what sort of value, one may well ask, is possible in a world such as that depicted by Spinoza ? The answer is to be found in a dual conception which Spinoza developed with great force and insight, the conception that there are degrees both in Reality and in our appreciation of it, that is, in our knowledge. The more we know, the more we are real and the nearer we are to our perfection.

IV

THE GRADES OF KNOWLEDGE AND CONDUCT

In the fragment *On the Improvement of the Understanding* (p. 361, l. 13 f.) Spinoza tells us explicitly that he is going to study the sciences only in so far as they will help him to find man's highest good. The *Ethics* is the fulfilment of this early programme. Physics, psychology, logic—theory of body, theory of soul, theory of knowledge—meet together and culminate in theory of conduct. They are all systematically interconnected. The development of body involves the development of mind; and each grade in the development of mind conditions, and is conditioned by, a grade in the development of knowledge. Spinoza in the *Ethics* (II, 40 sch. 2) distinguishes three such grades:[1] the "vague experience" of ordinary life, which is little better than ignorance; the "possession of common notions and adequate ideas of the properties of things;" which is the 'abstract' understanding of science; and "intuitive knowledge," which is the 'concrete' insight of philosophy. We have now to see in detail what these grades are, and how, corresponding to each of them, there is a specific level of moral ideal and conduct.

[1] In the D.I.E. (p. 362) there are four, in the *Short Treatise* (II, c. 1 and *e.g.* c. 4, end) both three and four (the four are arrived at by the sub-division of the first of the three into two). It should be noted that the doctrine has a long history behind it, being explicit already in Plato.

(*A*)—The Life of Ignorance and Slavery

Knowledge, as we saw earlier (p. 104), is primarily an expression of the knower, not of the known. It is at its lowest when the experience of the knower is so limited as to be all but confined to itself. Then we have the blind universalising of personal prejudice, which is the source of the anthropomorphic misinterpretation of the universe.[1] We then project our own image on everything else, and can conceive of nothing except in terms of ourselves. This dogmatism, always the product (and sign) of a narrow experience, Spinoza calls "opinion or imagination." It is not really knowledge at all. It is a haphazard re-presentation of confused perceptions and vague reminiscences. It never rises to a clear idea or a universal truth; indeed, it does not understand what a universal truth is. It is a stage at which particular and personal opinions alone are in view, and it is to them alone that the words 'true' and 'false' are attached. The corresponding level of conduct is obvious. It is that at which particular and personal desires are alone in view, and at which they alone are called 'good' and 'evil.' There is, then, at this stage no one standard for conduct just as there is no one standard for truth. The world of morals, like the world of knowledge, is a chaos: "Each person judges or estimates what is good and what is evil, what is better and what is worse, and what is the best and what is the worst, in accordance with his emotional nature. Thus

[1] "The ideas which we have of external bodies indicate rather the constitution of our own body than the nature of external bodies, as I have explained in the Appendix to Part I with many examples" (Eth. II, 16 cor. 2). This, then, is the "deduction from the nature of the human mind" of the "prejudices concerning *good* and *evil*, *merit* and *sin*, *praise* and *blame*, *order* and *disorder*, *beauty* and *deformity* and the like," which is promised in Eth. I, Appendix, quoted above, p. 47.

the covetous man thinks plenty of money to be the best thing and poverty the worst. The ambitious man desires nothing so much as glory, and, on the other hand, dreads nothing so much as shame. To the envious person, again, nothing is more pleasant than the misfortune of another, and nothing more disagreeable than the prosperity of another. And so each person according to his emotional nature judges a thing to be good or evil, useful or useless. . . . The joy of one differs in character from the joy of the other as much as the essence of the one differs from the essence of the other " (Eth. III, 39 sch. ; 57 sch.).

There are thus no common standards of living. Each one does what is right in his own eyes and tries to impose his own ideas upon others. But there is something further. We are not only at war with all others. We are also at war with ourselves. The " idea or soul " of the individual is distracted internally. " In so far as one and the same man is agitated by passions he is himself changeable and inconstant " (IV, 33). At this stage, then, there is not only no society ; there are no real individuals either. We neither think nor act with clear vision. We are at the mercy of every wind and wave. We ' think,' but it is mere ' imagining.' We ' act,' but it is at a command. We pass our lives like soldiers in the ranks—fears, hopes and desires are imposed on us from without. Our actions are not dependent on ourselves ; they are not really ours at all. We have nothing of our own. In the term used by Spinoza, we are ' slaves.' " For this is certain, and we demonstrated its truth in our *Ethics*, that men are of necessity liable to passions, and are so constituted as to pity those who are in misfortune, to envy those who are well off, and to be more prone to vengeance than to mercy. It is certain also that each individual wishes the rest to live after his mind, and to approve what he approves and reject what he rejects ; whence it comes to pass that, as all are equally eager to be first, they fall

to strife and do their utmost mutually to oppress one another" (Pol. c. 1, § 5).

Spinoza's point is that, since our actions are an inevitable outcome of our personality, so long as men see nothing beyond themselves they cannot help interpreting everything in terms of themselves and trying to cut others to their measure. But this narrowness of outlook is ignorance, and ignorance (which for Spinoza, it must be emphasised, is a spiritual state, not a mere lack of information) can be removed. In a sense, of course, all things are in bondage. We are all, and inevitably, "servants, aye, slaves, of God" (K.V. II, c. 18). We are all "in the power of God as clay in the hand of the potter" (Pol. c. 2, § 22; Ep. 75, p. 312), all parts of a nature which is vaster than ourselves and by which we are inexorably limited (Eth. IV, 2–4). But for all that there is a world of difference between a man who understands what is happening to him and a man who does not. If we understand what is happening to us we still do what we cannot help, but we do it as full conscious instruments. We are then active in the only way in which we can be active. Independent we can never be—only God is independent—yet our dependency need not be blind. "The sole perfection and the final end of slaves and tools" may well be, as Spinoza writes in the *Short Treatise* (II, c. 18), "that they duly perform the task imposed on them." But if they perform their task duly, and fulfil it consciously and gladly, they become one with the hand of their master. They are no longer passive tools but active agents.

That a man who follows his passions is a 'slave,' while one who follows reason is a 'free man' (Eth. IV, Pref.; V, 41 sch.; Th.P. c. 16, p. 180, l. 25 f.), is an idea which, of course, is not original to Spinoza. We find it explicitly in Greek and other thought, nor does Spinoza claim it for his own. The turn he gives it, however, is of great

interest. He tells us repeatedly that mind is the principal part of man; in developing mind, then, we are coming to our fullest selves. But the development of mind, according to Spinoza's basic principles, can only come about through the widening of our concrete experience. It follows that our moral development is not opposed to, but is a concomitant of, our intellectual development, and both are stages in the natural development of man. Freedom is thus not a power of capricious action extraneous to the normal functioning of our nature. It is the necessity itself of our nature as it brings its own fundamental demands to realisation. Nor is the fruit of freedom the extraneous rewards which some have thought to be the rightful compensation for a life spent in the repression of desire (V, 41 sch.). It is the inner satisfaction which arises from the recognition and acceptance of the inevitable. We escape from bondage by the help of the understanding, and to understand is our proper activity. So far, then, as we understand, so far we are both most truly ourselves and morally free.

The free life of reason is not a life which is beyond emotion. An emotion, we remember (above, p. 106), is the feeling of 'tone,' the immediate consciousness of the level attained by our "power of existence." It is clear, then, that if the life of reason is the true life of man, it is lived at a high emotional pitch. The difference between it and the lower life lies not in the existence, but in the nature, of its emotions. Then, man was influenced entirely from without; now, at least partially, from within. He is no longer a blind victim; he sees and identifies himself with the directing arm: and in the act of understanding he is exercising his own supreme power, the power of thought. His consciousness, therefore, is not of external constraint, but of his own freely working energy. The free life of reason is charged with emotions, but they are

no longer passive, but active; and the task of moral science may be said to be to transmute passive emotions into active ones. The moralisation of life thus consists in ordering it in such a manner that there should be embodied in our acts a real element of ourselves. We then pass from slavery to freedom, the "freedom of the mind or blessedness," *mentis libertas seu beatitudo* (V, Pref.).

(*B*)—The Life of Science and Freedom

Although we speak of levels of knowledge and life in Spinoza, it must not be thought that they are sundered from one another. The higher levels are in no case something entirely new; they are developments from the lower, not fresh creations. So the beginnings of the life of reason are manifest earlier. Even at the first level factors are apparent which go beyond the merely selfish and personal. We have a native sympathy with our kind; we enlarge our outlook to the measure of classes and nations (III, 67, 46). We are not as a fact mere isolated individuals. We resemble other men and therefore feel with them; and we resemble them (and feel with them) because with them we inhere in a Nature which is the immanent Substance of the whole modal world.

In the same way our knowledge is never wholly confined to mere particulars. There are factors of experience which are common to all or many things, our own bodies included; and these are manifested in the smallest fragment of them as well as in the whole (II, 38). Spinoza is thinking here of factors and qualities which are not peculiar to any one thing, but which are common to all the members of a whole group of things or even to the one group of the whole of things, in which latter case

they would be what has been called 'pervasive.'[1] We have seen what some of them are in dealing with the "infinite modes." They are the most general properties of the whole physical world—spaciality, motion-and-rest—and they form the ultimate basis of the "common notions" or general axioms of the mathematical and physical sciences. When we are brought into contact with them (and it must be remembered that our power of interpreting them arises from the fact that, in our common inherence in the one universal nature, we are ourselves what we see in them), we achieve ideas which, reflecting universal facts, are true, or, in Spinoza's language, "adequate." "Those things which are common to everything, and which are equally in the part and in the whole, cannot be conceived except in an adequate manner. Hence it follows that some ideas or notions exist which are common to all men; for all bodies agree in some things (Lemma II [quoted above, p. 80]), and those things are bound to be conceived by all in an adequate manner, that is, clearly and distinctly. There will, then, exist in the human mind an adequate idea of properties which are common to the human body and any external bodies by which the human body is generally affected, and are present equally in the parts and in the whole of them" (II, 38 with cor., 39). We already know that knowledge is the mental experience co-ordinate with the physical fact. It follows that "the mind is the more fitted to form a multitude of adequate ideas the more things its body has in common with other bodies" (II, 39 cor.).

This second stage of knowledge, then, called by Spinoza the stage of *ratio* or scientific reasoning (II, 40 sch. 2), comes with the wider experience of body and mind. The body has come into contact with factors common to many or all bodies, its own self included; and the idea

[1] *Cf.* S. Alexander: *Space, Time and Deity*, preface to second impression (London, 1927), pp. viii–ix.

of this common factor, being possessed of a real generality, holds of them all and is 'adequate.' An adequate idea is an idea which is internally self-coherent, and which needs nothing outside it to explain it. Hence, at the lowest stage of knowledge, that of 'vague experience,' there are no adequate ideas at all. It is only when we see things, not as casual fragments, but as integral parts of groups of varying complexity and co-ordination, "linked together or distinct from one another," that we begin to approach real knowledge (II, 29 cor. and sch.).

As the mind advances on this path, it ceases to see things as contingent. So long as we remain passive to the rain of particular circumstance the world is for us a chaos. Anything might happen. But with the increase and deepening of contact there emerge to view the eternal laws, the laws of Nature which are the decrees and essence of God, by which all things come into and persist in being. It is in this sense that "it is of the nature of reason to perceive things under a certain form of eternity" (*sub quadam specie æternitatis*), and that "the human mind has adequate cognition of the eternal and infinite essence of God" (II, 44 cor. 2; 47). At this stage it is only under a *certain* aspect of eternity, and the cognition of the eternal and infinite essence, although adequate, is not complete. And the reason is clearly given: "The foundations of reason are opinions which are common to all and which do not explain the essence of any single thing," and this is so because of the primary fact that "that which is common to everything" [and so forms the material of our general, *i.e.* scientific, ideas] "and which is equally in the part and in the whole, forms the essence of no individual thing" (II, 44 cor. 2 dem.; 37). Spinoza thoroughly realised the deficiencies of scientific thought. It is only general. It is knowledge of law, not of intimate individuality. To know the essences of things, that is, to understand them not in their general aspect, as the

scientist does, but, so to say, as God does, from within, we need the higher grade of knowledge to which the one under discussion, the scientific, is said (II, 47 sch.) to point. We are here only midway in our course, but even so life is radically transformed.

For man is now rid of that type of delusion which, as we saw earlier, poisons human life. He no longer seeks to impose his own image on the world and its fulness. He lives and lets live. He knows that there are different things in the world and that each has a striving to persist in its own essence. Hence he no more seeks to impose his own striving on others than he will be disposed to admit the imposition of their striving on himself. He recognises that God is manifest variously, revealed in all but in a different manner in each. Hence he spends no time in vain comparisons. There is no sense in blaming a man for not being what he could not have been or in praising him for being what he could not help being.

For that is really what we are doing in our so-called 'moral' judgments. We have no more justification in calling a thief evil than in calling a man born blind evil. They are both deficient, but to blame them for a deficiency, that is, something that does not exist, is absurd. Even to talk of them as deficient is illogical. In themselves they are not deficient, they are just what they are; they only *appear* deficient when compared with others. The thief is lacking a quality possessed by an honest man in the same way as the man born blind is lacking a sense possessed by normal people. They are wanting characteristics which others, similar to them in other respects, are endowed with; but they cannot rightly be said to be 'deprived' of them for the sufficient reason that they had never had them. Thus 'evil' and misfortune, like falsity, are nothing positive. They are 'negations,' non-entities, and as such, when considered by themselves, not real.

We shall have a later opportunity of seeing how Spinoza uses this doctrine of 'privation' and 'negation' in connexion with the ethical problem (below, p. 187 ff.). It does not, of course, as is often supposed, do away with responsibility or preclude the imposition of legal sanctions. We may kill or remove a poisonous snake from our immediate neighbourhood (and so in a sense hold it 'responsible' for its actions), although we know that it only does what it cannot help doing. "A horse is excusable for being a horse and not a man; but nevertheless it is a horse it must needs be and not a man. If a man goes mad from the bite of a dog, he is certainly to be excused; but yet it is right that he should be suffocated" [1] (Ep. 78, quoted below, p. 182). What Spinoza's doctrine does do (and this is more to our immediate purpose) is to call attention to the positive basis of freedom. Freedom for all and each, we are told in the *Political Treatise* (c. 2, § 7), lies in "having the power to exist and to act in accordance with the laws of human nature."

What are these laws? The answer lies ready to hand in the facts already established. The essence of man is a *conatus*, a striving to persist. Yet man is only a part of nature, and nature contains an infinite number of other things each with a striving of its own. The constituents of the universe are thus all acting upon and interacting with all the rest. Here are the facts, and the conclusion is evident. The 'good' for each thing is that which helps it. The good for man is that which helps man, just as the good for fishes is that which helps fishes. The ability and power to secure this good is 'virtue.' "The more each person strives and is able to seek his own utility, that is, to preserve his own being, the more virtue does he possess" (Eth. IV, 20). Spinoza denies that there is

[1] I assume this to refer to the practice, of which one hears elsewhere, of suffocating persons bitten by a mad dog in order to prevent them from biting others. Spinoza's correspondent (Ep. 79) takes the whole passage differently.

any 'moral' law distinct from 'natural' law, although of course a fuller understanding of natural law may further refine our conceptions of what it, and with it moral law, really is. Intrinsically, moral law is one with natural right: "by 'virtue' and 'power' I understand the same" (IV, def. 8).

What Spinoza intends by 'power' and 'essence' (and hence 'virtue') he defines constantly. We may take one representative passage: "By the right and ordinance of nature I understand nothing but the conditions of the nature of each individual thing in accordance with which we conceive each individual thing to be determined by nature to live and act in a definite way. For instance, fishes are determined naturally to swim, and the greater to devour the less; therefore fishes have possession of the water, and the greater devour the less, by sovereign natural right. For it is certain that Nature in the absolute sense has sovereign right to do everything it can. In other words, the right of Nature is co-extensive with its power, for the power of Nature is the power itself of God, who has sovereign right over all things. But, inasmuch as the universal power of the whole of nature is nothing but the aggregate of the powers of all its individual components, it follows that each individual thing has sovereign right to do anything that it can; that is to say, the right of each individual thing extends exactly so far as does its determinate power. Now since it is the supreme law of Nature that each individual thing endeavours, to the full extent of its power, to preserve itself as it is without regard to anything but itself, it follows that each individual thing has this sovereign right, namely, to exist and act just as it was determined by Nature. So far as this is concerned we acknowledge no difference between mankind and other individual natural entities; nor between men endowed with reason and those to whom true reason is unknown, nor between fools and madmen, and sane men.

Whatsoever an individual thing does by the laws of its nature it has a sovereign right to do, inasmuch as it acts as it was determined by Nature, and cannot act otherwise" (Th.P. c. 16, p. 175). The ultimate fact, then, is the power given us by Nature. Everything is what it is and acts accordingly. Good is "that which we certainly know is useful to us;" evil, "that which we certainly know hinders us" (Eth. IV, defs. 1 and 2).

The crux of the conception is clearly that of the meaning to be attached to the word 'useful' (*utile*). Now by 'useful' Spinoza does not mean crude utility. The human being is not only part of the system of Nature; he is himself a system. He is not only an element within the balance of the whole; he is himself a balance. That, then, is 'useful' to man in the full sense of the word which promotes the vigour of the whole of the elements within him. Good is that which helps us to maintain within ourselves that balance through which we persist in our power; bad is that which hinders us, and thwarts our free and harmonious self-development. But is there any pattern which we follow in our development, any determinate factor which is our special 'power' or 'essence'? Spinoza holds that there is. We *have* a special 'power' or 'essence.' It is the power of thought. "The mind in so far as it uses reason judges nothing to be useful to itself except that which conduces to understanding" (Eth. IV, 26). It is man's intelligence, then, which constitutes his specific nature just as the power to live in water constitutes the specific nature of fishes. In so far, therefore, as we can shape out the needs and outlook of man as thinker, in so far we are on the track of a definite, and (for human beings) valid, moral code.

This conception of a "model of human life" (*naturæ humanæ exemplar*, Eth. IV, Pref., last paragraph) or an "idea of a perfect man" (*Idea van een volmaakt*

mensch, K.V. II, c. 4, G. p. 60, l. 21; W. p. 75, l. 27) goes far back in Spinoza's history. In the *Short Treatise* already (*loc. cit.*) he sees in it the solution of the problem of the "good and evil of man," and we have a similar statement of doctrine in the fragment *On the Improvemen of the Understanding*: "Good and evil are terms with only a relative significance. One and the same thing can be called good and evil in accordance with its different relations, just as one and the same thing may be called from different points of view both perfect and imperfect; for there is nothing which considered in its own nature can be called perfect or imperfect, especially after we have discerned that everything which comes to pass comes to pass according to an eternal order and fixed natural laws. But since human weakness cannot grasp that order by its own thought, while in the meantime *man can imagine a human nature much more steadfast than his own to the acquisition of which he sees no obstacle*, he is stimulated to seek the means which may lead him to such a perfection. Everything, therefore, which can be a means of achieving it he calls a true good" (D.I.E. p. 360).

These passages are the embryo of the preface to Book IV of the *Ethics*, in which a detailed criticism is given of the idea of Perfection :—

"If a man planned to do a thing and carried it through, he calls the product of his labours perfect, and not only he, but every one else who really knew, or believed that he knew, his mind and intention. For example, if a man sees a piece of work, which I suppose to be as yet not finished, and knows that the intention of the worker was to build a house, he will call the house imperfect; but as soon as he sees it brought to the end which the workman planned, he will call it perfect. But if a man sees a piece of work such as he has never seen before, and if he does not know the mind of the workman, he will then not

be able to say whether the work is perfect or imperfect. This seems to have been the first signification of these words. . . ." The argument is clear. Perfection is a term which has no intrinsic significance at all. A thing is said to be perfect only in relation to something else: a manufactured article, when it conforms to plan; a natural object, when it approximates to type; and the grade of the perfection varies with the degree of the conformity or approximation. The same holds of perfection in human conduct (or goodness) and its opposite. Good and evil have meaning and a real meaning, but only relatively to what we choose as an ideal.

". . . Perfection, therefore, and imperfection are really only modes of thought, that is to say, notions which we are in the habit of forming from the comparison with one another of individuals of the same species or genus. This is the reason why I said (II, def. 6) that by reality and perfection I understood the same thing. For we are in the habit of referring all individuals in nature to one genus which is called the most general, that is to say, to the notion of being which embraces absolutely all things. In so far, therefore, as we refer the individual objects in nature to this genus and compare them to one another and discover that some possess more being or reality than others, in so far we call some more perfect than others; and in so far as we assign to the latter anything which, like limitation, end, impotence, and the like, involves negation, we call them imperfect, not because they are wanting anything which really belongs to them or because nature has committed an error in their regard, but because they do not affect our minds so strongly as the things we call perfect. For nothing belongs to the nature of anything excepting that which follows from the necessity of the nature of the efficient cause, and whatever follows from the necessity of the nature of the efficient cause necessarily happens.

"With regard to good and evil, these terms indicate nothing positive in things considered by themselves, nor are they anything else but modes of thought, or notions which we form from the comparison of one thing with another. For one and the same thing may at the same time be both good and evil or indifferent; music, for example, is good to a melancholy person, bad to one in mourning, and neither good nor bad to the deaf. But though the truth of the matter is as I have said, yet these words must be retained. For since we desire to form for ourselves an idea of man upon which we may look as a model of human nature (*naturæ humanæ exemplar*), it will be of service to us to retain these expressions in the sense which I have mentioned. By good, therefore, I understand in the following pages everything which we are certain is a means by which we may approach nearer and nearer to the model of human nature which we set before us; by evil, everything which we are certain hinders us from reaching that model. Again, I shall call men more or less perfect or imperfect in so far as they approach more or less nearly to this same model. For it is to be carefully observed that when I say that an individual passes from a less to a greater perfection and *vice versa*, I do not understand that he is changed from one essence or form into another (for a horse, for instance, would be as much destroyed if it were changed into a man as if it were changed into an insect), but rather we conceive that his power of action, in so far as it is understood by his own nature, is increased or diminished" (Eth. IV, Pref.).

We saw earlier (above, pp. 45 ff., 74) how Spinoza refused to apply non-human standards to human things and human standards to non-human things. But this is not to destroy human standards; it is rather (within their own circle) to re-affirm them. The rejection of anthropocentricity which is the mainspring of his work

has a positive as well as a negative side. It forbids us to interpret the universe by human standards, but that is all the more reason for human standards to apply to humanity. It excludes final causes (*i.e.* ethical considerations) from the study of nature as a whole, but that frees from extraneous and disturbing factors not only the study of nature, but also ethics itself. Our judgments of good and evil cannot be extended to the universe; they have no validity beyond their own bounds. But within those bounds they are valid; they are absolute within their limited reference. In this way a middle course is steered between those who would deny the reality of morality and those who would affirm that human moral ideals are the key to all things. For Spinoza the moral life is real enough; it was its problems which set him on the path of philosophy. But its sphere is the sphere of humanity. It is the key to nothing but itself.

We may distinguish two movements in the course of Spinoza's exposition in the fourth book of the *Ethics*, a critical and a constructive, the critical in a weighing and assessing of the 'passions' to which man is necessarily subject, the constructive in the offering of the broad outline of a definite exemplar of life.

We may start with the former movement, the critical (for the latter, see below, p. 135 ff.).

The primary emotion is *cupiditas*, the fundamental 'desire' or 'striving' which is the spring of all activity. Is it good or bad? The question answers itself. Being a primary fact it is 'beyond,' because the foundation of, 'good and evil.' "Since virtue is nothing else than acting in accordance with the laws of our own nature, and since no one endeavours to preserve his own being except in accordance with the laws of his own nature, it follows that the foundation of virtue is that endeavour itself to preserve our own being, and happiness

consists in a man's success in preserving his own being" (IV, 18 sch.).

We come next to Pleasure and Pain. What is their place in the moral life? The answer is clear. Since pleasure is the emotion accompanying activity, it is the type of good. Since pain is the emotion arising from a thwarted activity, it is the type of evil (IV, 41). Good and evil may, indeed, be defined in terms of pleasure and pain (III, 39 sch.). Spinoza is very careful to distinguish between pleasure in the complete sense and the over-excitement of any one side of human nature which he calls *titillatio* (IV, 43); and he takes the word *hilaritas* (cheerfulness)—the settled habit of happiness accompanying a full and harmonious balance of body—to express that joy which can have no excess. Such cheerfulness, as he remarks, "is more easily imagined than observed.

"For the emotions by which we are daily agitated are as a rule connected with some one part of the body which is affected more than the others. It is for this reason that the emotions exist for the most part in excess and compel the mind to the contemplation of one single object in such a way that it can think about nothing else. And although men are subject to a number of emotions, and therefore are seldom always under the control of any one, yet there are men to whom one and the same emotion clings pertinaciously. We see men sometimes so affected by one object that, although it is not present, they believe it to be before them; and if this happens to a man who is not asleep, we say that he is delirious or mad. Nor are those believed to be less mad who are inflamed by love, dreaming about nothing but a mistress or harlot day and night, for they excite our laughter. But the avaricious man who thinks of nothing else but gain or money, and the ambitious man who thinks of nothing but glory, inasmuch as they do harm, and are, therefore, thought

worthy of hatred, are not believed to be mad. In truth, however, avarice, ambition, and the like are a kind of madness, although they are not reckoned amongst diseases" (IV, 44 sch.). Excessive stimulation of any one part of us is, then, bad, and much so-called pleasure is on this ground to be condemned.

So much for the primary emotions. Next come the derived. Love may "have an excess" if it springs not from the whole of the person, but only from one part, and it may therefore be bad. Hatred, on the other hand, and with it its derivatives—envy, mockery, contempt, anger, revenge—can never be good, for the destruction we intend by them is the very denial of existence. By the mockery which he condemns, Spinoza means malice, not laughter (which is good), and the noting of the fact gives him occasion to voice a protest against asceticism both as a creed and as a life: "For laughter and merriment are nothing but joy, and therefore, provided they are not excessive, are in themselves good. Nothing but a gloomy and sad superstition forbids enjoyment. For why is it more seemly to extinguish hunger and thirst than to drive away melancholy? My own way of living and of looking at the matter is this: No divine power and no human being, except an envious one, is delighted by my impotence or my trouble, or esteems as virtue in us tears, sighs, fears and other things of this kind, which are signs of mental impotence. . . .[1] To make use of things, therefore, and to delight in them as much as possible (not, indeed, to over-satiety, for that is not to take delight) is the part of the wise man. It is the part of a wise man, I say, to refresh and invigorate himself with moderate and pleasant eating and drinking, with sweet scents and the beauty of green plants, with ornaments, with music, with sports, with the theatre, and with all things of this kind which one man can enjoy without hurting another.

[1] For the omitted sentence, see next page.

For the human body is composed of a great number of parts of diverse nature, which constantly need new and varied nourishment in order that the whole of the body may be equally fit for everything which can follow from its nature, and consequently that the mind may be equally fit to understand many things at once" (IV, 45 sch. 2).

There is to be noted not only the sentiment voiced, but also the reasons given for it. Human beings should enjoy a jest, and good food and music, because the human body is what it is; and the human body is what it is because it is a part of physical nature and under the universal sway of motion and rest: "The objective essence [the essence as presented in thought] of this actual ratio of motion and rest which is in the thinking attribute, is the soul of the body, so that whenever the quantity of one of these two modes changes, the idea which is the soul changes also. For example, when the amount of rest happens to increase while the quantity of motion is diminished, there is produced in us the pain or sorrow which we call cold; but if, on the contrary, the increase takes place in the amount of motion, then there is produced in us the pain which we call heat" (K.V. Append. II, end). Thus soul and body are modified together: physical motion and psychical emotion are manifestations of one and the same change. And Spinoza does not shrink from the fullest implications of the doctrine. The world of motion-and-rest is the modal derivative of Extension, and Extension is an attribute of Divinity. Hence, in the words of the omitted lines of the scholium just quoted, "the more we are affected by joy, the more we pass to a greater perfection, that is to say, the more we necessarily participate in the Divine nature (*magis de natura divina participare necesse est*)."[1] It would be difficult to find a more Spinozistic thought, or one expressed in a more Spinozistic way.

[1] IV, 45 sch. 2; so IV, Append. § 31 and Ep. 19, last §, quoted below, p. 185.

There will be found many unexpected judgments in the sections dealing with the emotions, but they will be seen to be one and all immediately deducible from the primary hypothesis. Hope, for example, is not in itself good. It is bound up with fear (" there is no fear without hope nor hope without fear," III, App. § 13, explic.); and so, together with security, despair, triumph and remorse, it is a sign of weakness (IV, 47 sch.). The same holds of pity, humility and repentance. " Pity in a man who lives according to the guidance of reason is in itself evil and unprofitable, for pity is sorrow and therefore is in itself evil " (IV, 50, with dem.). " Humility is not a virtue, that is to say, it does not spring from reason " (IV, 53). Spinoza is here speaking of the humility which " springs from a man's contemplating his own weakness," and which has a bad effect on the character because by it his " power of action is crippled." He specifically recognises, however, that if a man " forms a conception of his own weakness because he understands something to be more powerful than himself, and, in the light of that knowledge, consciously limits his own power of action " (IV, 53 dem.); if, that is, his humility is not a sentimental self-abasement but a conscious recognition of limitation, then that kind of humility, if humility it be called, is not a weakness, but strength. In the light of this conception Spinoza's view of repentance easily follows. It is defined (III, App. § 27) as " sorrow accompanied by the idea of something done which we believe to have been done by a free decree of our mind," and is said to involve double harm, for " we allow ourselves to be overcome, in the first place, by a wrong desire, and, in the second place, by sorrow for it " (IV, 54 dem.).

When Spinoza says that pity, humility and repentance are bad in themselves, he does not mean that they have no redeeming side to them. With men as they are they are of benefit. For " inasmuch as men seldom live as

reason dictates, these two emotions of humility and repentance, together with hope and fear, are productive of more profit than disadvantage, and therefore, since men must err, it is better that they should err towards that side. For if men impotent in mind were all equally proud, equally shameless and fearful of nothing, by what bounds could they be united or restrained? The multitude becomes a thing to be feared if it has nothing to fear. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that the prophets, who thought rather of the good of the community than of the few, should have commended humility, repentance, and reverence so highly. Indeed, those who are subject to these emotions can be led much more easily than others to live at last according to the guidance of reason, that is to say, to become free men and enjoy the life of the blessed" (IV, 54 sch.). And the same is true of many other emotions: "Pity, like shame, although not a virtue, is nevertheless good in so far as it shows that the man who is touched by shame has a desire to live uprightly; just as pain is called good in so far as it shows that an injured part has not yet putrefied. A man, therefore, who is ashamed of what he has done, although as a fact he feels pain [which in itself is bad], is nevertheless more perfect than the shameless man who has no desire at all to live uprightly" (IV, 58 sch.).

We may here leave further detail in the criticism and turn to the constructive side. We have seen the nature of the emotions to which we are necessarily subject and their place in the economy of human life. We have seen in them what is bad and what is good; our reflective consciousness has passed judgment on ourselves. But this is not moral living. It is the summing up of the judge, not the reform of the criminal; but it is just the practical reformation which is Spinoza's aim. The essential part of the problem still remains, how to influence men's lives.

The answer generally given to this question could not be accepted by Spinoza. We have no separate faculty of 'will' (*cf.* above, p. 110 ff.) under our direct control, and so we cannot, through the intellect, move it towards good. Nor, as he is careful to point out, can the intellect by itself avail anything. The mere intellectual recognition of what is right—"the knowledge of good and evil" (IV, 14)—is powerless to affect action. We need to be able to control our emotions, and no amount of theory will enable us to do that. No, says Spinoza, it is only an emotion which can control an emotion. "An emotion cannot be restrained or removed except by an emotion contrary to and stronger than the emotion to be restrained" (IV, 7).

This far-reaching proposition is thoroughly symptomatic of Spinoza's general position, and is the basis of his practical philosophy. If we would refashion our lives we must substitute emotions which we approve for those of which we disapprove. Since, however, it is the situation which calls out the emotion, so that under given conditions a specific emotion is evoked inevitably whatever we may think or desire (for "inadequate and confused ideas follow by the same necessity as adequate or clear ones," II, 36), the only way permanently to control our emotional nature is to establish ourselves within one great situation which should call out an emotion both congenial to ourselves and strong enough to overpower all others. What that great situation and that supreme emotion are, we shall see in the sequel (*cf.* below, pp. 142 f., 149 f.). We must turn to a subsidiary point, the movement from the individual to Society.

It will be remembered (above, p. 51) that in the original programme laid down in the fragment *On the Improvement of the Understanding*, Spinoza expressed his conviction that the good which he sought must be common to all. In the *Ethics* this is demonstrated. At the lowest stage of knowledge, that of "opinion or imagination," men

have nothing in common: ignorance divides. "He who strives from feeling alone to make others love what he himself loves, and live according to his way of thinking, acts from mere impulse, and is therefore an object of hatred, especially to those who have other tastes and who therefore also desire and strive by the same impulse to make others live according to their way of thinking, not his" (IV, 37 sch. 1). At the stage of reason, however, men have reason and its work: knowledge unites. "It arises from no accident but from the very nature of reason, that the highest good of man is common to all, inasmuch as it is deduced from the human essence itself in so far as it is determined by reason, and also because man could neither exist nor be conceived if he had not the power of rejoicing in this highest good. For it pertains to the essence of the human mind to have an adequate knowledge of the eternal and infinite essence of God" (IV, 36 sch.). It follows that the good is not a private possession. It is "common to all and all may equally enjoy it" (36). Indeed, the more its character is appreciated the more readily and gladly it will be shared: "The good which everyone who follows after virtue seeks for himself he will desire for other men, and his desire on their behalf will be greater in proportion as he has a greater knowledge of God" (37). The sharing of the highest is thus the main motive of society, and man finds his freedom, that is, himself, not in the isolated life of a hermit but in living with other men: "We can never free ourselves from the need of something outside us for the preservation of our being; we can never live in such a manner as to have no intercourse with objects which are outside us. Indeed, so far as the mind is concerned, our intellect would be less perfect if the mind were alone and understood nothing but itself. . . . Nothing is more useful to man than man. Men can wish for nothing more excellent for the preservation of their own being than that

all should agree in all things in such a way that the minds and bodies of all should form, as it were, one mind and one body" (IV, 18 sch.). Society is the medium wherein this fusing and enlarging of individuals takes place. It follow that "a man who is guided by reason is freer in a state where he lives according to the common laws than in a solitude in which he obeys himself alone" (IV, 73).

The political bearing of this view of Freedom is patent. It leads straight to democracy. It is only in a democracy, as Rousseau was to insist later, that the freedom of the moral agent is compatible with the obedience of the citizen, since, in obeying the laws, the people under law, being their own legislators, are really obeying themselves and so remain free. "The ideal is that the whole of society should hold the supreme power collegiately. . . . In a society in which the supreme power is in the hands of all and laws receive their sanction from the common consent . . . the people retains its freedom throughout because it acts not by external authority but its own consent" (Th.P. c. 5, p. 60, l. 13 ff.; *cf.* c. 16, p. 179, l. 19 f., 180, l. 25 f.). All other forms of government are tyrannical: "For a government which looks no farther than to lead men by fear will be rather without vices than possessed of virtue. But men should be led in such a way that they may think they are not led, but are living after their own mind and according to their own free choice, and so that they are controlled only by the love of liberty, the desire to increase their property, and the hope of gaining the honours of the state. Effigies, triumphs, and other incitements to virtue are signs rather of slavery than of freedom. For rewards of virtue are decreed to slaves, not to free men" (Pol. c. 10, § 8).

In the last propositions of the fourth book of the *Ethics*, Spinoza offers a picture of the life of the free man (*homo liber*), beginning with the sentence: "A free man thinks of nothing less than of death, and his wisdom is not a

meditation upon death but upon life "—*Homo liber de nulla re minus quam de morte cogitat, et eius sapientia non mortis sed vitæ meditatio est* (IV, 67). Much of the phraseology of the description comes from the Stoics; but Spinoza's ideal was not, like theirs, that of a 'king' over circumstance who stands apart from his fellows, but that of a citizen who lives with other men and helps his fellows within a living society. His virtues are summed up in the ideal of courage (*fortitudo*), the strength of mind and character which enables a man to think out his path clearly and well: "These, and the like things which we have demonstrated concerning the true freedom of man, are due to fortitude, that is to say, to strength of mind and generosity. Nor do I think it worth while here to demonstrate separately all the properties of fortitude, and still less to show how the man of firm character (*vir fortis*) can hate or be angry with no one, cannot be envious or indignant or contemptuous, and can least of all be proud. For these and all other points which have to do with true life and religion are easily deduced from those propositions which show that hatred is to be overcome by love, and that every one who is guided by reason desires for others the good which he seeks for himself. In addition, we must remember what we have already observed, that the man of firm character will ever keep it before his mind that all things follow from the necessity of the divine nature, and that consequently the fact that he considers some things to be injurious and evil, and others impious, dreadful, unjust, or wicked, arises from his own unsteady, partial, and confused view of things. For this reason, his principal aim is to conceive things as they are in themselves, and to remove the hindrances to true knowledge, such as hatred, anger, envy, maliciousness, pride, and the rest; and in this way he strives his utmost, as we have said, to act well and to rejoice (*bene agere et lætari*)" (IV, 73 sch.).

In the Appendix to the fourth part of the *Ethics*, Spinoza summarises his results. The striking picture it offers in its thirty-two paragraphs is more than a distant description of an ideal. It is, unconsciously, no doubt, a 'self-portrait,' giving expression to that joyful acceptance of the world (*acquiescentia in se ipso*, the "internal peace and confidence" as William James translated the phrase) which, the "highest good for which we can hope" (IV, 52 sch.), is the keynote of Spinoza's own life. We have seen it in the anecdotes culled from those who knew him by Colerus (above, p. 11 ff.), and it is reflected in his own words of himself: "I seek to pass my life not in sorrow and lamentation, but in tranquillity, joy and cheerfulness, and thus I attain a higher grade (*et subinde gradum unum ascendo*). In the meanwhile I recognise, and the recognition affords me the highest satisfaction and peace of mind, that all things happen as they do by the power of the most perfect Being and his immutable decree" (Ep. 21, p. 127).

(*C*)—The Life of Philosophy and the Intellectual Love of God

The intermediate stage of life passes into the third and highest when abstract recognition passes into concrete appreciation. Man is then conscious of nature as a unity, but not as before from the outside. He feels it in himself; he understands its wholeness in and from his own being. He thus not only contemplates externally the ways of the universe in which, like everything else, he is caught up. He not only sees himself as one item in the detail controlled by an all-embracing cosmic order. Nature for him is more than an abstract whole of general laws. It is a concrete system of self-directing individualities. He knows himself in it as an individual, and realises his place in it

among other individuals. He grasps both himself and things, not in their universal aspect only, but in their unique singularity. He has absorbed the truths of the discursive reasoning of science and passed beyond it to the intuitive apprehension of philosophy.

Now since the universe is more than any of its parts, the emotion aroused by it is more intense than that aroused by anything else. Hence the emotion felt by the free man in the exercise of this highest insight swallows up all others. It becomes the supreme principle of his life, controlling and directing every motive. As activity, as the perfect function, it is accompanied by joy. But the joy is not blind ; it is fully conscious of its source : it is thus more than joy ; it is love. This love springs from and comes through knowledge, and so may rightly be called intellectual. Its object is the whole universe, Nature or God ; it is hence the love of God. In the phrase which expresses this state of spiritual enlargement and exaltation, the " intellectual love of God " (*amor Dei intellectualis*), there lie enshrined the fundamental motives of Spinoza's philosophy—a life which is of knowledge, an activity which is of the emotions, a Nature which is not dead but the very living God.

The conception has often been thought to be a flight into the realms of poetry, and it is partly, perhaps, its mystical tone which has given it its fascination ; but like everything else Spinoza wrote it is the plainest prose. Nor is it peculiar to the *Ethics*. In one form or another it is to be found in all his works ; and it is worth while going back to his earlier writings in order to see the shape it assumed in them.

The fragment *On the Improvement of the Understanding*, as we saw (above, p. 41 f.), tells how Spinoza, convinced of the futility of most of the things on which human beings set their minds, determined to seek for an 'eternal and infinite thing' from the 'love' of which would follow

an eternal and infinite satisfaction. He soon recognised that it was only the 'unique and infinite sum of all being' which could satisfy this demand. It was the systematic unity of all things that he saw to be the norm and ideal of the mind's thinking, and it is in the thinking and recognition of it, so he declared, that man reaches his perfection: the *summum bonum*, to quote an early sentence (p. 360, l. 23), is the "knowledge of the union which the mind has with the whole of nature." We have here clearly all the notes of the conception of the *Ethics*; the object—the totality of Nature; the means—knowledge; the emotion—love; the reward—perfection. The only thing lacking is the explicit identification of the totality of all being with God.

This we find in the *Short Treatise*. Its very keynote is 'God-or-Nature,' and it is this 'God-or-Nature' which is specifically singled out, in the dialogues inserted after the second chapter of the first part, as the object for which Love searches and which, by the aid of Reason, it finds. Here we have the central idea of the mature philosophy. It is only the all-inclusive whole, Nature as understood by reason, which is capable of satisfying the demands of the human emotions. Thus God is the beginning and end both of knowledge and of conduct, and the highest life is that which is lived in the full consciousness of him: "The final end that we seek, and the highest that we know, is true knowledge. But even this true knowledge varies with the objects that come before it: the better the object with which it comes to unite itself, so much the better also is this knowledge. And for this reason he is the most perfect man who is united with God, the most perfect Being of all . . ." (K.V. II, c. 4). And again: "The foundation of all good and evil is Love bestowed on a certain object: for if we love not that object which alone is worthy of being loved, namely, God, but things which through their very character and nature are

transient, then (since the object is liable to so many accidents, aye, even to annihilation) there necessarily result hatred, sorrow, and the like, according to the changes in the object loved: hatred, when any one deprives us of what we love; sorrow, when we chance to lose it; vainglory, when we lean on self-love; favour and gratitude, when we do not love our fellow-man for the sake of God.

"But, in contrast with all these, when man comes to love God who always is and remains immutable, then it is impossible for him to fall into this welter of passions. And for this reason we state it as a fixed and immovable principle that God is the first and only cause of all our good and delivers us from all our evil" (K.V. II, c. 14).

That this conception is offered as a practical rule of life for the generality of mankind—not as a pious phrase "for a death-bed, when disease has conquered the passions," or "for places of worship where men have a holiday from business" (Pol. c. 1, § 5)—is proved by the fact that it reappears in Spinoza's writings on politics, not perhaps in the same technical form, but certainly with the same intention. Thus we have the bare statement of the *Political Treatise* (c. 2, § 22): "It is certain that a man is the more free and living the most in accordance with his own nature (*sibi maxime obsequentem*) the more he loves God and the more he worships him with his whole mind." Or we may refer to the fuller passage of the *Theological-Political Treatise*: "Inasmuch as the intellect is the best part of our being, it is certain that we should make every effort to perfect it as far as is possible if we desire to search for what is really profitable to ourselves; for it is in its perfection that the highest good must consist. Now, since all our knowledge, and the certainty which in truth removes every doubt, depends solely on the knowledge of God (firstly, because without God nothing can exist or be conceived; secondly, because so long as we have no clear and distinct idea of God we can remain in universal doubt),

it follows that our highest good and perfection also depend solely on the knowledge of God. Further, since without God nothing can exist or be conceived, it is certain that all natural things, in accordance with the character of their essence and perfection, involve and express the conception of God; so that we have a greater and more perfect knowledge of God in proportion as our knowledge of nature increases, while conversely (since the knowledge of an effect through its cause is the same thing as the knowledge of a particular property of a cause), the greater our knowledge of nature the more perfect is our knowledge of the essence of God (which is the cause of all things). So, then, all our knowledge, that is, our highest good, not only depends on the knowledge of God, but wholly consists therein. This same conclusion follows also from the fact that a man is the more perfect or the reverse in proportion to the nature and perfection of the object which he loves beyond all else; hence he is the most perfect and participates most in supreme blessedness who loves above all else, and takes especial delight in, the intellectual knowledge of God, the most perfect Being. It is to that, then, that our supreme good and blessedness turn—namely to the knowledge and love of God" (Th.P. c. 4, p. 45 f.). In these and similar passages (and they could be multiplied indefinitely), we see the character of Spinoza's thought. It is a fusion of religion and science, effected through and expressed in the identification of God with Nature. He has taken over the great forms of theology, God, Love, Salvation, and has poured into them the matter derived from the concrete studies of physics and psychology. 'God' is the whole of Nature. 'Love' is the joy of activity (the supreme activity of thought) accompanied by knowledge of its object. 'Salvation' comes through the dissociation of our emotions from the trivial objects of everyday life and the attaching of them to that which alone is eternal.

We have now to follow this Way of Salvation. It will be as well to study first the account given in the *Short Treatise*.

We may take a representative passage: "We said before that in Nature there can be nothing of which there is not an Idea in [the thinking thing, which idea is] the soul of that thing. And according as the thing is either more or less perfect, so also is the union and working of the idea with the thinking thing, or with God himself, less or more perfect. For as the whole of Nature is but one substance, and one whose essence is infinite, all things are united through Nature, and they are united into one [being], namely, God. And now, as the body is the very first thing of which our soul becomes aware (because, as already remarked, nothing can exist in Nature, the idea of which is not in the thinking thing, this idea being the soul of that thing), so that thing must necessarily be the first cause of the idea. But as this idea can by no means find rest in the knowledge of the body without passing on to the knowledge of that without which the body and idea could neither exist nor be understood, so (after knowing it first) it becomes united with it immediately through love.

"This union is better understood, and one may gather what it must be like, from its action with the body, in which we see how through knowledge of, and feelings towards, corporeal things, there arise in us all the consequences which we are constantly becoming aware of in the body through the movements of the [vital] spirits; and therefore (if once our knowledge and love come to embrace that without which we can neither exist nor be understood, and which is in no way corporeal) how incomparably greater and more glorious will and must be the kind of consequences which result from this union; for they must necessarily be of the same kind as the thing with which it takes place.

"And when we become aware of these consequences, then we may say with truth that we have been born again. For our first birth took place when we were united with the body, through which the activities and movements of the [vital] spirits have arisen; but this our other or second birth will take place when we become aware in ourselves of entirely different consequences of love, commensurate with the knowledge of this incorporeal object, and as different from the first as the corporeal is different from the incorporeal, spirit from flesh. And this may, therefore, all the more justly and truly be called Regeneration, inasmuch as it is only from this love and union that there arises eternal and unchangeable existence. . . ." (K.V. II, c. 22.)

The aim, then, set before man is a 'second birth' or 'regeneration'; and the 'regeneration' is effected through the expansion and extension of knowledge from the knowledge of particular bodies to the knowledge of their ultimate ground, that is, God.

Now Spinoza held that this, the highest kind of knowledge, is of a very special kind. It is not 'discursive,' proceeding from point to point in the order of discovery. It is that internal acquaintance with the inmost constitution of things which is the mark of intuition. It is hence called in the *Ethics* by the specific name of *scientia intuitiva* or 'intuitive knowledge' (II, 40 sch. 2), although the word 'intuitive' is used in connexion with it already from its first appearance in the fragment *On the Improvement of the Understanding* (p. 364, l. 13). It is defined there as a perception of a thing "through its essence alone," and Spinoza confesses that "the things which he had so far been able to understand in such a way were very few" (p. 362, l. 20; p. 363, l. 18). In the *Short Treatise* it is said "not to consist in being convinced by reasons but in an immediate union with the thing itself"; and, later, that "it does not result from something else but

from a direct revelation of the object itself to the understanding" (K.V. II, c. 4, first note; c. 22, first paragraph). Thus Spinoza, with Plato before him and many others since, held that above and beyond the ratiocination and general reasoning which constitutes the way of scientific thought there is an intuition into individual essences. He held that this kind of knowledge made the possessor one with the object known, a conception perhaps to be illustrated, as is suggested by Schopenhauer (*World as Will and Idea*, Book III, § 34), by the peculiar character of an artist's vision. This intimate knowledge is exemplified, according to the fragment *On the Improvement of the Understanding* (p. 363, l. 15), by the mind's knowledge, through insight into its own essence, of its necessary union with body. The same kind of union obtains also between the human mind and God, so we learn in the *Short Treatise*, as soon as we understand the nature of the eternal and infinite essence: "When we come to know God after this manner, then (as he cannot reveal himself, nor become known to us, otherwise than as the most glorious and best of all) we must necessarily become united with him. And it is in this union alone, as we have already proved, that our blessedness consists. I do not say that we must know him just as he is, or adequately, for it is sufficient for us to know him to some extent in order to be united with him. For even the knowledge that we have of the body is not such that we know it just as it is, or perfectly; and yet, what a union! What a love!" (K.V. II, c. 22).

Spinoza thinks in the *Short Treatise* that mind or soul, once it enjoys the highest knowledge, can never be parted from its object. Now its object, God, is stated explicitly to be incorporeal (above, p. 187). It would follow that the soul, in its union with God, has an incorporeal life, too. This is the meaning of the phrase 'second birth' used in this connexion. The 'first birth' is the union of soul

with body; the 'second birth'—Regeneration and Salvation—is the union of soul with God. When united with God it is no longer dependent on the chances of the body and remains as unchangeable and everlasting as that to which it is united: "Since the essence of God is infinite, it has an infinite activity and an infinite negation of passivity. In consequence of this, the more that, through their greater essence, things are united with God, so much the more they have of activity and the less of passivity: and so much the more also they are free from change and corruption.

"The true understanding can never perish, for in itself it can have no cause to destroy itself. And as it did not emanate from external causes, but from God, it is not susceptible to any change through them. And since God produced it immediately and he alone is an inner cause, it follows necessarily that it cannot perish so long as this cause of it remains. Now this cause of it is eternal, therefore it too is so" (K.V. II, c. 26).

The sequence of thought is clear, though not, of course, beyond criticism. Life is transformed through the knowledge which is love, and in that knowledge passes beyond life.

The concluding book of the *Ethics* takes up all the conceptions of the *Short Treatise*. The matter (apart from one notable change which we shall see shortly) is the same, although developed more fully and with greater wealth of empirical detail and practical advice. But the manner has altered. The old enthusiasm is restrained. The dry bones still live, but their informing spirit is a geometrical order.

The basic teaching again concerns the emotions:

"Thoughts and the ideas of things are arranged and connected in the mind in the same way as the modifications of the body or the images of things are arranged

and connected in the body. . . . If we detach an emotion of the mind or feeling from the thought of an external cause and connect it with other thoughts, then the love or hatred towards the external cause, together with the mental agitation which arise from these emotions, will be destroyed. . . . A passive emotion ceases to be a passion as soon as we form a clear and distinct idea of it. . . . There is no modification of the body of which we cannot form some clear and distinct conception. . . . An emotion towards an object which we imagine simple, and not as necessary, possible or contingent, is, other things being equal, the greatest of all. . . . In so far as the mind understands all things as necessary, in so far it has greater power over the emotions or is less passive to them. . . . The emotions which spring from reason or which are excited by it, are, if time be taken into account, more powerful than those which are related to individual objects which we contemplate as absent. . . . The greater the number of the causes which simultaneously concur to excite any emotion, the greater that emotion will be. . . . The greater the number of objects to which an image is related, the more frequent it is, that is, the more often does it flourish, and the more does it occupy the mind. . . . The mind can cause all the modifications of the body or the images of things to be referred to the idea of God . . ." (Eth. V, 1–14, with omissions). We had been taught earlier that " an emotion cannot be restrained or removed except by an opposite and contrary emotion " (IV, 7 ; above, p. 136). We now see the supreme application of the doctrine. All things may be " referred to God," that is, be apprehended not only as items of a general order (of which they are all equally and indifferently representative and in which, for all the 'laws' of science can tell us, they are interchangeable with one another without loss), but in their immediate and specific inherence in the whole within which they have

each a unique and defined place. This apprehension, however, is not a mere passive awareness. It is an active effort, the highest effort of our nature; and it leads to the highest life of which we are capable, the life in which insight and emotion meet in intellectual love. The spiritual state which is knowledge is here at its supreme plane: "The mind can cause all the modifications of the body or the images of things to be referred to the idea of God. . . . He who clearly and distinctly understands himself and his emotions loves God, and the more so, the more he understands them. . . . This love to God is bound to occupy the mind above all else" (V, 14–6).

We are here back at the starting-point of Spinoza's pilgrimage as recounted by himself (above, p. 42). The next propositions follow his first steps. The significance of the idea of God is that God is the one object of desire the pursuit of which leads not to strife but to peace: "God is free from passions, nor is he affected by any emotion of joy or sorrow. . . . He who loves God cannot strive that God should love him in return. . . . This love of God cannot be sullied by feelings of envy or jealousy; it is rather strengthened in us the more we imagine others to be connected with God by the same bond" (V, 17, 19–20).

"We have now," says Spinoza, "given all the remedies against the passions," and proceeds immediately to summarise them (20 sch.). The propositions, therefore, about unselfish love for the selfless God are a part of the doctrine concerning the emotions, and Spinoza makes this clear in a passage which recalls the opening words of the fragment *On the Improvement of the Understanding* and various passages in the *Short Treatise*: "It is to be observed that bitterness and misfortunes mainly arise from excess of love for objects which are liable to many changes and of which we can never be in full possession. For no one is troubled or anxious about an object which he does not love; nor do wrongs, suspicions, hatreds, and

the like arise except from love towards objects of which no one can be truly the possessor.

" From all this we see easily the power which clear and distinct knowledge, and especially that third kind of knowledge the basis of which is simply and solely the knowledge of God, possesses over the emotions ; a power by which it is able, if not actually to destroy them in so far as they are passions, at least to make them constitute the smallest part of the mind. Moreover, it begets a love towards an immutable and eternal object in which we may all truly share ; a love which, therefore, cannot be spoiled by the defects which are common to other kinds of love, but which can always become greater and greater, and occupy the mind most completely, and affect it in its fullest extent."

He then goes on :

" I have now concluded all that I had to say relating to this present life (*præsentem hanc vitam*). . . . It is now time to turn to the consideration of those matters which appertain to the duration of the mind without relation to the body (*ad mentis durationem sine relatione ad corpus*)."

These words, and the propositions which follow, constitute a standing puzzle of interpretation. What does Spinoza mean by the " present life," and what is the " duration of the mind without relation to the body " ? Are we to understand Spinoza to be talking about what is commonly called immortality, and is the reference (as it is certainly in the corresponding passage in the *Short Treatise*) to an ' incorporeal ' *soul*-life ; or is he simply indicating the transition from the lives of everyday experience and of scientific reason with which he has dealt till now to life of the highest level of knowledge to which he is from now on devoting the exposition, and saying that in the exposition he will give an account of mind only, none of the corresponding state of body ? The answer, as so often in Spinoza, seems to be, in the well-known phrase of Jowett,

" neither and both." Spinoza is talking about immortality, but it is an immortality which has no connexion with temporal existence, but which is a spiritual state achieved and enjoyed in this life; and in this life it is " he who possesses a body fit for many things " (that is, he who has had the widest and profoundest contacts with experience and has risen to the highest level of knowledge) who " possesses a mind of which the greater part is eternal " (V, 39). The level of being achieved in this life persists after it and constitutes the " duration of the mind without relation to the body." For when the balance of motion-and-rest which maintained the body as one extended mode is upset beyond recovery, when, that is, it suffers what is called death, then the clash with other bodies which gave rise to its emotional life necessarily ceases, and the thinking mode is free and undisturbed. " It is only for the duration of the body that the mind is subject to passive emotions " (V, 34).

Spinoza, then, seems to maintain that the thinking mode which is our mind persists at the level to which it has risen " in this life " (*in hac vita*, V, 39 sch.), and that the persistence is in some way independent of the extended mode which was its body. Of its latter end we are told only that " our mind, in so far as it understands, is an eternal mode of thinking, which is determined by another eternal mode of thinking, and this again by another, and so to infinity, so that all together constitute the eternal and infinite intellect of God " (40 sch.). This is a fact (whatever its meaning might be); but for Spinoza it is not the point of interest. His interest is in this life and in the conduct which the conditions of life impose upon, and demand from, man; and it is in and for this life that the doctrine of ' eternity ' which is the kernel of his doctrine has significance. " Spinoza's main contention," to quote Professor Joachim, " is that the man whose self is most real, whose eternal individuality is most concrete and

valuable, is he whose life is one unswerving effort towards clear knowledge—not the knowledge of mere theory, but the knowledge which informs and vitalises conduct: the 'knowledge' which to Socrates and Plato was identical with goodness. It is no life of visionary idleness, of mystic contemplation. It is a life of intense activity filled with the duties and pleasures of a many-sided existence: the life of every day but not lived with an 'everyday' spirit. For the activity of such a life is not the restless passing from interest to interest, but the untroubled expression of a single purpose. The consciousness of the significance of that purpose is the spirit which animates the free man's conduct: and in the knowledge of its fulfilment he is in perfect possession of himself" (*Study of the Ethics of Spinoza*, pp. 304–5).

It is this "perfect possession of himself" which constitutes man's eternity and in virtue of which it is true to say that "we feel and experience that we are eternal" (*sentimus experimurque nos æternos esse*, V, 23 sch.). It is no accident that this state is expressed in the same word as is the being of God. God too is eternal in that, in the full sense, he is in "perfect possession of himself"; and his freedom is that activity in accordance with the laws of his own nature which (of course in a less degree) constitute freedom for man. Eternity, then, is not an infinite *quantity* of duration, a span of time extending into endless futurity. It is the *qualitative* level of existence which, in the words of the *Metaphysical Thoughts* (II, c. 1), is the divine essence itself, that essence in which, as we have seen (above, p. 133; *cf.* below, pp. 162 and 185), man at his highest participates. Duration is the measure of the existence of modes. Eternity is the "infinite enjoyment of being" (*infinita existendi, sive, invita Latinitate, essendi fruitio*, Ep. 12, p. 55, ll. 2–3), which is the prerogative of Substance. It is in so far as man apprehends his place in Substance, or rather, perhaps, if

the phrase be allowed, apprehends the place of Substance in himself, that he enjoys eternity.

We may here remind ourselves (*cf.* above, p. 78) of the "two ways in which things are conceived by us as actual: either in so far as we conceive them to exist in relation to a fixed time and place, or in so far as we conceive them to be contained in God and to follow from the necessity of the divine nature. In the latter case they are conceived under the form of eternity, and their ideas involve the eternal and infinite essence of God" (V, 29 sch.). And to make the point clear Spinoza refers the reader to the forty-fifth proposition of the second book ("every idea of any body or actually existing individual thing necessarily involves the eternal and infinite essence of God") with its scholium: "By existence is to be understood here not duration, that is existence considered in the abstract, as if it were a certain kind of quantity; for I speak of the nature itself of the existence which is assigned to individual things, because from the eternal necessity of the nature of God an infinity of things follow in an infinity of ways. I speak, I say, of the existence itself of individual things in so far as they are in God. For although each individual thing is determined by another individual thing to existence in a certain way, the force nevertheless by which each thing perseveres in its existence follows from the eternal necessity of the nature of God" (II, 45 sch.). All things are, in fact, dependent on God, not only distantly, as links of a causal chain proceeding ultimately from him, but also intimately and directly; and man, in the experience of himself and things 'under the form of eternity,' both understands the dependence and in the understanding comes to himself. This is the "knowledge of God and of ourselves" which, in Spinoza's words in a letter to Blyenbergh (Ep. 23, below, p. 191), is "the principal thing which makes us men"; this, the "love of God" in

virtue of which, as we learned from the *Political Treatise* (above, p. 143), we are "the most free and truly ourselves."

The doctrine of eternity, therefore,[1] is at once the crown of Spinoza's practical philosophy and the key to its theoretical difficulties. It shows us, on the one hand, what the reality of man truly is, and thus indicates the supreme moral goal. It re-affirms, on the other, the central thesis that God comes not last but first. The whole is prior to the parts, the infinite to the finite; and the explanation of the universe is to be sought for, not in the finite, which is only a limitation of the infinite, but in the 'absolute affirmation of existence' (Eth. I, 8 sch. 1), the infinite itself.

We reach at this point the concluding propositions of the *Ethics*. Their detailed interpretation is difficult and has given rise to much dispute. But the broad lines of the thought are clear.

When the mind in the expansion of knowledge learns to know itself as what in fact it is, namely, an integral part of the infinite attribute of Thought; when it is, in Spinoza's words, "conscious of itself, of God and of things"—the oft-repeated collocation is notable—it has passed, as we have seen, beyond the stage in which the general laws of science with their temporal successions are believed to give the whole truth about anything, and sees everything *sub specie æternitatis*, under the veritable form (not, as before, *sub quadam specie*, under a certain form) of eternity. Now, this innermost grasp of the essences of things in their singularity is not only of the same kind as the intuitive understanding of God, with whom, in his identity with Nature, it is simply self-knowledge. It is, since the human mind is a part

[1] See an essay by Mr. H. F. Hallett: *Spinoza's Conception of Eternity* (Mind, xxxvii, p. 283 ff., July 1928).

of the divine mind (D.I.E. p. 380, l. 11; Eth. II, 11 cor.; above, p. 98), a fragment of that very self-knowledge itself. But knowledge is an activity, not a passive deposit, and every activity is accompanied by joy. This third kind of knowledge, therefore, being the highest and best of all, is accompanied by the highest joy. Joy attended by the idea of its cause is love, therefore with this knowledge comes love; and since this holds of God as well as of man, it would follow that God himself, in this supreme activity, not only rejoices, but also, knowing himself as the cause of the joy, loves himself. Man, in the activity and joy of thought and in the knowledge that God is the cause of his joy, loves God. But the knowledge of man is a part of the knowledge of God; therefore the love of God by man is a part of the love with which God loves himself. It follows that "God, in so far as he loves himself, loves man, and consequently that the love of God towards men and the intellectual love of the mind towards God are one and the same thing" (V, 36 cor.). Hence, it is added in the scholium: "We clearly understand that our salvation or blessedness consists in a constant and eternal love towards God or in the love of God towards men." It is "constant" in a very real sense. It is both called out by the whole of nature and so irresistible (this is the point of the opening propositions of the fifth book, quoted above, pp. 148–9), and is the full fruit of our developed humanity, so that in it mind finds itself and is therefore in the full sense free. At this height we do not fear death (38). Mind has an "eternal part," the intellect, and the intellect retains its activity (40, with cor.).

At this point, which states rather than solves a problem (for Spinoza evidently allows a reality to mind distinct from that of body, a thing which, on his own principles, he certainly has no right to do), Spinoza deliberately turns upon himself: "Even if we did not know that our mind

is eternal, we should still consider Piety and Religion, and in general everything which we showed in the fourth part to pertain to strength of mind and generosity, of first importance.

" DEMONSTRATION : The primary and unique foundation of virtue or of the proper conduct of life is to seek our own utility. But in order to determine what reason prescribes as useful, we took no account of the eternity of the mind, which we did not recognise till we came to this fifth part. We were at that time ignorant of the eternity of the mind and yet were brought to consider the things which we showed to appertain to strength of mind and generosity as of first importance. And so we should still consider those commands of reason as of first importance, even though we were now ignorant of the eternity of the mind " (V, 41).

What does Spinoza mean ? Does he mean only that his earlier doctrine holds good, whatever we may think about his theory of the eternity of mind ? Yes, and more. In these last pages he has given his metaphysical justification for his ethical doctrine, and he seems to say : " Accept my metaphysics or not, but retain my practical teaching." But he is saying something more than that. He is giving a grave and serious warning that moral teaching must be based, not on a doctrine of extraneous rewards and punishment, but on an appreciation of the nature of man. The freedom of man lies in living in accordance with moral principles, but these principles spring and derive authority, not from anything external to man, but from his innermost character and constitution. " The creed of the multitude seems to be different. For most people seem to believe that they are free in so far as it is allowed them to obey their lusts, and that, in so far as they are constrained to live in accordance with the principles of divine law, in so far they are giving up some of their rights. And so they look upon piety

and religion, and in general everything which pertains to firmness of mind, as burdens, and hope to lay them down after death and to receive a reward for their servitude, that is, for their piety and religion. Nor is it only by this hope, but also and especially by fear of dreadful punishments after death, that they are induced to live, so far as their feebleness and weakness of spirit allows them, by the principles of divine law; and if they did not have this hope and fear, but, on the contrary, believed that minds perish with the body, and that there is no prolongation of life for poor mortal men worn out by the burden of piety, then they would return to their own ways and be willing to arrange all things by their passions and follow chance rather than their own real nature. All of this seems to me to be no less absurd than if a man, because he does not believe that he can nourish his body with good food for ever, should choose instead to glut himself with poison and deadly things; or, because he sees that the mind is not eternal or immortal[1] should prefer to live as a madman and without reason at all. But this is so absurd as to be scarce worthy of mention" (V, 41 sch.).

So in the *Ethics* there is brought to its solution the difficulty which has been haunting us throughout, and which seemed likely to wreck Spinoza's inquiry at the outset. The words 'good' and 'evil,' so we learned repeatedly (above, p. 127 ff.), have meaning only in relation to our purposes, 'perfect' and 'imperfect' only in respect of conformity to type. We ought, then, never to say 'good' by itself, but 'good *for*' some thing or purpose, never 'perfect' by itself, but 'perfect *in respect of*' a certain plan. But if this is true, Spinoza would seem to be brought at once to an impasse, since

[1] The only time the word is used in the *Ethics*. The phraseology is, of course, popular.

it is just an absolute 'good' and a 'perfect' satisfaction of which he is in search.

We are now taught that there is one object of desire which is common to all, and hence one 'good' which is absolute; and that with that one 'good' we are, by the very constitution of our being, intimately connected. The utility which we all seek is not something which is arbitrarily set before us from without, nor is it the crudely useful. It is "that which is consonant with our nature" (IV, 31), and our nature is what it is through its inherence in the infinite nature which is the universe or God. "To understand is the absolute virtue of the mind, and the highest thing which the mind can understand is God" (IV, 28 dem.). "It is therefore most profitable to us in life to make the intellect or reason as perfect as we can, and it is in this one thing that the highest happiness or blessedness of man consists; for blessedness is nothing but the peace of mind which springs from the intuitive knowledge of God, and to perfect the understanding is nothing but to understand God together with the attributes and actions of God which flow from the necessity of his nature. The final aim, therefore, of a man who is guided by reason, that is to say, the chief desire by which he strives to control all his other desires, is that by which he is led to conceive adequately both himself and all things which can be the objects of his intelligence. There is no rational life, therefore, without intelligence, and things are good only in so far as they help man to enjoy that life of the mind which is determined by intelligence" (IV, Append. iv–v). This life of the mind needs no external justification; its sanction is its own intrinsic rightness. "Blessedness is not the reward of right living; it is the right living itself"—*Beatitudo non est virtutis præmium, sed ipsa virtus* (V, 42).

It is characteristic of Spinoza that he does not conclude the *Ethics* with this famous phrase. He is interested

throughout in practical conduct, and adds a completing sentence to the final proposition, which turns what might have been taken for a mere pious sentiment into a profound psychological maxim : " Blessedness is not the reward of right living ; it is the right living itself. Nor do we delight in blessedness because we restrain our desires. On the contrary, it is only because we delight in it that we are able to restrain them."

Thus the whole ends on a practical note. The metaphysical machinery—substance, attributes, modes, motion-and-rest, infinite intellect—has served its purpose. The issue of immortality, so much canvassed by moralists of all ages, is set aside as irrelevant to the main point. We are left with the sober observation that we do not first restrain our passions and then concentrate our minds ; on the contrary, it is only by means of the concentration of the mind that we are able to restrain our passions. Nor is the doctrine new in Spinoza. It not only resumes the whole of his teaching on the relation between thought and feeling, reason and emotion, knowledge and life. It reproduces the explicit teaching of the last chapter of the *Short Treatise*, the first systematic presentation of his doctrine : " We have shown how and in what manner, through reason as also through the fourth kind of knowledge, we must attain our blessedness, and how the passions must be overcome—not, as is commonly held, that they should be subdued first before we can attain to the knowledge, and consequently to the love, of God. That would be to insist that an ignorant man should first abandon his ignorance before he can attain to knowledge ! The truth is that it is only through knowledge that they can be overcome."

We may well continue the passage, as it shows how little development there was in Spinoza's essential views from the very first : " It may also be clearly gathered from what we have said that without virtue, or (to express

it better) without the guidance of the understanding, everything tends to ruin, so that we can enjoy no rest, and we live as it were outside our element. So that even if from the power of knowledge and the divine love there accrued to the understanding not an eternal rest, such as we have proved, but only a temporary one, it is still our duty to seek it, since even this is such that if once we taste it we would exchange it for nothing else in the world.

" This being so, we may with reason regard as a great absurdity the assertion of many who are otherwise esteemed as great theologians that if there were no eternal life consequent on the love of God, they would then seek what is best for themselves : as though they could discover anything better than God. This is as foolish as if a fish (which cannot, of course, live out of water) were to say : if no eternal life is to follow this life in the water, then I shall leave the water for the land. . . .

" So we see that, in order to arrive at the truth of our definite conclusions concerning human happiness and repose, we require no other principles except the natural one that we should take our own interest to heart. And since we see that when we pursue sensuousness, pleasure and worldly things, we find not happiness but ruin, we choose instead to follow the guidance of our understanding. As, however, this can make no advance before it has attained the knowledge and love of God, it was therefore most necessary to seek God ; and as we have discovered that he is the best of all that is good, we are compelled to take our stand and to rest with him. For we have seen that, outside him, there is nothing that can give us any happiness ; and it is a true freedom to be bound with the loving chains of his love, and to remain so.

" Finally, we see also that reasoning is not the principal thing in us. It is only like a staircase by which we can climb up to the desired place, or like a good genius which,

without any falsity or deception, brings us tidings of the highest good, thereby to stimulate us to pursue it and to become united with it; which union is our supreme happiness and bliss. . . ." (K.V. II, c. 26.)

Before Spinoza entered upon his account of human life and conduct he made certain preliminary claims for his theory. "It is of service," he says (II, 49 sch. end), "first of all, in so far as it teaches us that we do everything by the will of God alone and that we participate in the divine nature in proportion as our actions become more and more perfect and we more and more understand God. This doctrine, therefore, besides giving repose in every way to the soul, has also this advantage, that it teaches us in what our highest happiness or blessedness alone consists, namely, in the knowledge of God by which we are drawn to do those things only which love and piety persuade. Hence we see clearly how far men are from the true estimation of virtue when they expect to be granted the highest rewards by God for right living and noble actions as if for the completest slavery. As if the right living itself and the service of God were not the essence of happiness and the highest freedom!

"Secondly, it is of service to us in so far as it teaches us how we ought to behave with regard to the things of fortune or those which are not in our power, to things, that is to say, which do not follow from our own nature; for it teaches us to await equably and to bear either turn of fortune, because we know that all things follow from the eternal decree of God in accordance with the same necessity as that by which it follows from the essence of a triangle that its three angles are equal to two right angles.

"Thirdly, this doctrine contributes to the welfare of our social existence, in that it teaches us to hate, despise, mock, be angry with, and envy no one, and teaches everyone to be content with his own and to be helpful

to his neighbour, not from any womanish pity, partiality or superstition, but from the guidance of reason alone, according to the demand of time and circumstance.

" Finally, it contributes not a little to the advantage of common society, in so far as it teaches us by what means citizens are to be governed and led; not in order that they may be slaves, but that they may freely do those things which are best (*non ut serviant sed ut libere ea quæ optima sunt agant*) . . ."

The claim which, in these sentences, Spinoza makes for his principles can only be tested fairly in the light of the evidence of those who have tried to live by them. They have certainly proved to many, as to Hale White (" Mark Rutherford "),[1] " productive beyond those of almost any man . . . of that *acquiescentis mentis* which enables us to live." At the same time they offer grave difficulties, some due to misunderstanding, some springing out of their inmost character. One fundamental issue is the account of God, and of the relation between God and the world; another, that of the very possibility of moral conduct where necessity reigns supreme; yet another, that of the validity of the philosophical foundations upon which the whole is based. All these points—theological, ethical and metaphysical—were raised, and with the utmost clearness, in Spinoza's own lifetime, and we shall turn at once to the questions of his critics and to the replies which they elicited from Spinoza himself.

[1] *Pages from a Journal* (London, 1901), quoted by A. S. Oko in *Chron. Spin.* II, p. 238; *cf.* below, p. 211.

BOOK III

SPINOZA'S PLACE IN HISTORY

I

SPINOZA AND THE CRITICISM OF HIS CONTEMPORARIES

(*A*)—Theological

Spinoza's philosophy centres round his doctrine of God, and the points in it which were likely to arouse controversy were succinctly indicated by himself in an early letter (1661) to Oldenburg: "Many attributes which are usually ascribed to God . . . I treat as created things; while others, which owing to prejudice are treated as created things, I maintain to be attributes of God and to have been misunderstood. . . . Further, I do not, as have all others of whom I have knowledge, separate God from Nature" (Ep. 6, end). It may be presumed that the 'attributes' considered by others as appertaining to the essence of God and by Spinoza as 'created' are the properties (omniscient, almighty, eternal, simple, etc.) discussed in the *Short Treatise* (*cf.* above, p. 64 ff.); while those considered by others as 'created' and by Spinoza as 'attributes' are, of course, Thought and Extension. Spinoza then felt that the novelties in his position were that he had deprived God of the conventional attributes, including those of creativity and goodness; that he had then given him unconventional ones, more especially that of Extension; and lastly that he had specifically identified God with Nature. The history of the reception of Spinoza's thought after his death was to justify these anticipations. As we shall see, it was precisely these points, with their supposed corollaries, which were to

excite the fiercest opposition. But the antagonism which they gave rise to was apparent during Spinoza's lifetime as well, and it is of supreme interest and importance to see how he dealt with them himself.

We may consider first a typical brush with a highly trained philosopher, jurist and physician, for whose " love for truth and singular candour of mind " Spinoza expressed later a great respect (Ep. 69, end).

LAMBERT VAN VELTHUYSEN TO JACOB OSTENS (1671): " . . . You ask me to let you have my further and considered opinion on the *Theological-Political Discourse.* This I shall do as far as my time and ability allow; but I shall not deal with it in detail, only set out in broad outline the author's general sense and his religious outlook. . . .

" I do not know to what people he belongs or what mode of life he follows, but that is of no consequence. It is obvious from his book that he is not a fool, and that he has followed the currents of recent religious controversies in Europe with the closest attention. . . . He does not rise above the religion of the Deists, of whom, owing to the degeneration of the age, there are large numbers everywhere . . . but I think that hardly anyone of the Deists has written on behalf of that detestable cause with such malice and such perverted cleverness. . . .

" He recognises a God and professes that he is the creator and founder of the universe; but he maintains that the form, species and order of the world are completely determined. . . . He says expressly that everything comes to pass by inevitable necessity and inexorable fate. . . .

" He makes no mention in his book of the use of prayer . . . nor of future reward or punishment. . . . This is in full accord with his principles. For what place could

there be for a last judgment, what expectation of penalty or reward, when all things are ascribed to fate, and when it is maintained that everything emanates from God by inevitable necessity? Or rather when he maintains that this whole universe is God, for I fear that this is what he really means; at any rate, there is not much difference between saying that everything emanates necessarily from God's nature and that the universe itself is God. . . .

"Yet he sets the supreme pleasure of man in the worship of goodness, which he says is its own reward . . . and so would have it that an intelligent man should give care to goodness, not because it is commanded by the precepts and law of God or from the hope of reward or fear of punishment, but from the beauty of goodness (*pulchritudine virtutis*) and the joy of the mind which comes to man in the practice of it. . . .

"In my opinion he is destroying all worship and religion from the very foundation, and is craftily introducing Atheism. . . ." (Ep. 42).

SPINOZA TO OSTENS: "You are no doubt surprised that I have kept you so long for an answer, but I can hardly bring myself to reply to the long letter which you were good enough to send me. I am only writing now because I promised to. . . .

"Your correspondent says that, in order to escape the blame of superstition, I have cast off all religion. What he means by religion, and what by superstition, I do not know. Can a man be said to have cast off religion when he maintains that God must be acknowledged as the highest good and must be loved as such with a free mind, and that our supreme happiness and supreme freedom lies in nothing but that love? Or when he declares that the reward of goodness is the goodness itself, while the punishment of folly and weakness is the folly? Or lastly, when he affirms that every man is bound to love his

neighbour and to obey the commands of the supreme power? Such doctrines I have not only stated expressly, but have proved by the most solid of reasoning.

"However, I think I see the mud in which he sticks. He finds nothing to please him in goodness and intelligence taken by themselves, but would prefer to live in accordance with the promptings of his passions, if only he were not afraid of being punished for it. So he abstains from wrong-doing, and obeys the divine commands, like a slave, with unwillingness and hesitation; and looks forward to being recompensed by God, as the reward of his service, with gifts far more pleasing [to him] than the divine love, gifts which are to be the greater in proportion to his dislike of goodness and his consequent unwillingness to practise it. This is the reason for his belief that everybody who is not restrained by the same fear leads a life of licence and throws off all religion.

"This, however, I pass over, and proceed to the argument by which he seeks to prove that my philosophy is a disguised atheism.

"The basis of his reasoning is that he thinks I deny freedom to God and subject him to fate. This is flatly false. For I have maintained that all things follow by inevitable necessity from the nature of God, in the same way as everybody maintains that it follows from the nature of God that he understands himself. No one denies that this follows necessarily from the divine nature; yet no one conceives that by it God is constrained by fate, but rather that he understands himself, although necessarily, with entire freedom. I find nothing in this which is not perfectly clear. . . .

"Further, this inevitable necessity in things destroys neither divine nor human laws. For moral principles are divine and salutary whether they received from God the form of laws or not. The good which follows from right living and the divine love is not the more or less desirable

whether it is apportioned to us by God as a judge, or whether it emanates from the necessity of the divine nature ; and the evils which attend upon wrong-doing are not the less to be feared because they follow from it necessarily. Whether we do what we do from necessity or from freedom, we are in either case led by hope and fear. It is then false to assert, as he does, that I maintain that there is no room left for precepts and commands, or, as he goes on to say, that there is no expectation of reward or punishment since everything is subjected to fate and is affirmed to proceed from God by inexorable necessity.

" I do not pause to inquire why it is the same, or almost the same, to say that all things necessarily flow from God, as to say that God is the universe ; but I would have you observe the no less malicious insinuation which follows that I wish that men should have care for goodness, not because of the precepts and law of God, or through hope of reward and fear of punishment ; and so on. You will certainly not find such a sentiment anywhere in my treatise. On the contrary, I stated expressly in Chapter IV that the sum of the divine law (which, as I said in Chapter II, has been divinely inscribed on our minds), and its chief precept, is to love God as the highest good : not, indeed, from the fear of any punishment, for love cannot spring from fear ; nor from the love of any other thing which we desire for our own pleasure, for then we should be loving not God, but that further object of our desire. I showed in the same chapter that this is the law which God revealed to the prophets, so that whether I look upon it as having received from God the form of a command, or whether I conceive it, like God's other decrees, to involve eternal necessity and truth, it will in either case remain God's decree and a principle which leads to Salvation. Whether I love God of my own free choice or whether from the necessity of the divine nature, I shall nevertheless love God and be saved . . ." (Ep. 43).

Broader ground is covered by another correspondence.

Hugo Boxel to Spinoza (1674): "... I should very much like to have your opinion on ghosts ..." (Ep. 51).

Spinoza to Boxel: "I do not know what they are and nobody has been able to tell me ..." (Ep. 52).

Boxel to Spinoza: "Preconceived opinion hinders the pursuit of truth. ... I believe that ghosts exist for the following reasons: first, because it appertains to the beauty and perfection of the universe that they should exist; secondly, because it is probable that the Creator created them because they are more like himself than are creatures with bodies; thirdly, because, just as body exists without soul, so soul exists without body; fourthly and lastly, because I believe that in the upper air, region, or space, there is no body, however obscure, without inhabitants of its own, and consequently that the measureless space between us and the stars is not empty, but thronged with spiritual inhabitants ..." (Ep. 53).

Spinoza to Boxel: "... Your first reason for your belief in the existence of ghosts is that it pertains to the beauty and perfection of the universe that they should exist. But beauty, honoured sir, is not so much a quality of the object beheld, as an effect in him who beholds it. If our sight were longer or shorter, or if our constitutions were different, what we now think beautiful we should think ugly and what we now think ugly we should regard as beautiful. The most beautiful hand seen through the microscope will appear horrible. Some things are beautiful when seen at a distance, ugly when seen near at hand. From these facts it is clear that things regarded in themselves (that is, in relation to God), are neither ugly nor beautiful, so that a man who says that God created the world in order that it should be beautiful, is bound to

adopt one of the two alternatives : either that God made the world to suit the desire and eyes of man, or else that he made the desire and eyes of man to suit the world. Now, whether we adopt the former or the latter of these views, I do not see how God could have furthered his object by the creation of spectres and ghosts. As for perfection and imperfection they are mere names, and do not differ much from the terms beauty and ugliness. So I ask only (not to be tedious) whether ghosts would contribute more to the perfect adornment of the world than a number of monsters such as centaurs, hydras, harpies, satyrs, gryphons, arguses, and other such inventions ? Truly the world would be handsomely bedecked, if God had adorned and embellished it, in obedience with our fancy, with beings which anyone may readily imagine and dream of, but which no one has yet been ever able to understand.

" Your second argument is that, because ghosts express God's image more than creatures with bodies, it is probable that God has created them. I confess frankly that I am as yet ignorant of the manner in which ghosts more than other creatures express God. I do know, however, that there is no measure of comparison between finite and infinite, so that the difference between God and the greatest and most excellent created thing is no less than the difference between God and the meanest. This argument, too, is therefore beside the mark. . . .

" Your third ground of belief (that in the same way as bodies exist without soul, so there are bound to be souls without body) seems to me equally absurd. Surely by the same argument we should have to expect that memory, hearing, sight, and so on, should exist without bodies, since bodies exist without memory, hearing, and sight. . . .

" Your fourth, and last, argument is the same as your first, and I refer you to my answer given above. I shall only add here that I do not know which are the highest

or which the lowest places which you conceive as existing in infinite matter, unless you take the earth as the centre of the universe. For if the sun or Saturn be the centre of the universe, the sun, or Saturn, not the earth, will be the lowest.

"Passing by this and the rest, then, I conclude that these and similar arguments will convince no one . . ." (Ep. 54).

BOXEL TO SPINOZA: "You say[1] that you do not allow any human attributes in God so that you should not confuse the divine with human nature. So far I approve. We do not perceive in what way God works, nor in what way he desires, understands, considers, sees, hears, and so on. But if you deny that he does these things at all and refuse validity to our highest contemplations concerning God; if, that is, you affirm that they do not exist in God at all, even metaphysically and in a 'higher sense' (*eminenter*), then I do not know your God (*tuum Deum ignoro*) or what you mean by the word. . . .

"With regard to ghosts, you must remember that demonstration is only possible in mathematics. . . . In the world we are not so exact. To a certain extent we admit conjecture and, in the absence of proof, argue from probabilities. This is clear from the fact that the sciences, both human and divine, are full of controversies and disputes. . . . I beg you to explain to me your idea of God, and to tell me whether it is as clear to you as the idea of a triangle . . ." (Ep. 55.)

SPINOZA TO BOXEL: "I suspect that you believe that no greater perfection exists than such as can be expressed in the [human] attributes you mention. I am not surprised at that, for I believe that, if a triangle could speak, it

[1] In the opening passage of the preceding letter, omitted in the excerpts given above.

would say, in like manner, that God is in a 'higher sense' (*eminenter*) triangular, while a circle would say that the divine nature is, in a 'higher sense,' circular. In this way each would ascribe its own attributes to God, and make itself like God, and look upon everything else as misshapen. . . .

"That we do many things in the world from conjecture is true, but that our reflections are based on conjecture is false. In practical life we are compelled to follow what is most probable; in speculative thought we are compelled to follow truth. A man would perish of hunger and thirst if he refused to eat and drink before he had obtained positive proof that food and drink would be good for him. But in philosophic reflection this does not hold. On the contrary, we must take care to admit nothing as true which is only probable; for when one falsity has been let in, countless others follow.

"Again, we cannot infer from the fact that both divine and human sciences are full of disputes and controversies that therefore their whole subject-matter is uncertain; for there have been many persons so much in love of contradiction as to ridicule geometrical demonstrations. . . .

"However, I let that pass and admit that in default of demonstration we must be content with probabilities, that is, approximations to truth. But such a probable proof must be such that, though we may have doubts about it, we cannot maintain its contrary; for that which can be contradicted [is not a probability at all, because it] approximates not to truth but to falsehood. For instance, if I say that Peter is alive, because I saw him yesterday in good health, this is a probability in so far as no one can maintain the contrary; but if anyone says that he saw Peter yesterday in a swoon and that he believes him to have departed this life since, he will make my statement seem false. That your conjecture about ghosts and spectres seems not even probable but false,

I have shown so clearly that I can find nothing worthy of answer in your letter.

"To your question whether I have as clear an idea of God as I have of a triangle, I reply in the affirmative. But if you ask me whether I have as clear an image of God as I have of a triangle, I reply in the negative. For we are not able to form an image of God, though we can understand him. You must also observe here that I do not assert that I know God completely, but that I understand some (not all or the greatest part) of his attributes; and it is certain that the fact that I am ignorant of very many of them does not prevent me from knowing those I do. When I learned Euclid's elements I understood first that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, and this property of a triangle I perceived clearly, although I was ignorant of many others. . . .

"But I have gone further, honoured sir, than I intended. I do not desire to cause any further annoyance by opinions with which I know you will not agree, for the principles which you follow are very different from my own" (Ep. 56).

One of the most interesting statements of Spinoza's theological views is to be found in the course of his later correspondence with Oldenburg. For some reason or other this correspondence was interrupted for about ten years, and when it was resumed Spinoza was no longer the recluse of Rhynsburg but the author of the *Theological-Political Treatise.*

The correspondence will explain itself.

SPINOZA TO OLDENBURG (1675): "At the time when I received your letter of the 22nd July [Ep. 62], I had gone to Amsterdam in order to arrange for the printing of the book [the *Ethics*] about which I had written to you. While I was making the arrangements a rumour gained currency that I had in the press a book on God in which

I was trying to prove that God does not exist. This story was generally believed. Hence certain theologians, perhaps the inventors of the rumour, took occasion to complain of me before the Prince and the magistrates. Moreover, the stupid Cartesians, being suspected of favouring me, endeavoured to remove the aspersion by abusing my opinions and writings everywhere, a course which they still pursue. When I heard of this from trustworthy men, who also assured me that the theologians were lying in wait for me everywhere, I determined to put off publishing till I saw how things would turn out, and I resolved to let you know later what plan I might then be following. But matters seem to get worse and worse, and I am still uncertain what to do. . . ."

This passage (Ep. 68), which is confirmed by a rescript of the Hague Church Council of 21 June and a private letter of 14 August (1675) which we happen to possess, contains the important points of the whole situation. Spinoza had certainly not been above suspicion in his early years (above, pp. 28–9), and recently discovered documents have shown how alive his enemies were to any trace of his influence. In 1665 a dispute over a local ecclesiastical appointment in which Spinoza's landlord at Voorburg was involved, brought him into unpleasant prominence, and a few years later (1668), at the trial of a man who was thought to reflect some of his opinions, determined efforts were made to implicate and destroy him.[1] The publication of the *Theological-Political Treatise* (1670) had shown the world that the very worst of these suspicions were justified. Henceforward, it is this book which is the determining factor in Spinoza's reputation. What even such a man as Colerus could write and repeat concerning him we have seen already (above, p. 14). All the numerous refutations of the Treatise turn on the same charges, all brand the

[1] For the documents relating to the above, see Lg. pp. 147, 200, 116 ff., 119 f.

author with the same unpleasant names. He was an atheist because he had denied the transcendence of God, and a destroyer of morals because he declared that the reward of right living is the right living itself. The best that could be (and was) said of such "monstrosities and profanities" was that they "merited the flames of hell" (Kortholt: *De Tribus Impostoribus Magnis*, Cologne, 1680, p. 181). And so, indeed, according to prevailing beliefs, they did. It was to be long before the ideas of natural law and intrinsic morality were to be listened to even by philosophers; and if we would estimate how thought has progressed since Spinoza wrote, it is essential to remark the fierceness of the odium which he aroused.

Now Spinoza was not the man to recant his opinions. At the same time he was anxious to remove misunderstandings about them. We find him, therefore, at this time, proposing to "illustrate the Treatise with some notes, and so if possible remove the prejudices which it had aroused." He concluded the letter to Oldenburg, from which quotation has been made, therefore, with a request to "let him know which of its opinions were thought to weaken the practice of religious virtue and what passages in it had caused difficulty to learned men."

Oldenburg to Spinoza: ". . . I cannot but approve your purpose of illustrating and softening down those points in the *Theological-Political Treatise* which have given pain to its readers. The most important of these I should consider to be the ambiguities in your treatment of God and Nature, which two, so a great many people think, you have confounded together. Secondly, you seem to many to take away the authority and value of miracles, by which alone, according to the belief of nearly all Christians, the certainty of the divine revelation can be established. Thirdly, people aver that you conceal your opinion concerning Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of

the world and the only Mediator for mankind, and concerning his incarnation and redemption.

" They demand that you give a clear explanation of what you think on these three subjects. If you do this, and give satisfaction in it to sincere and rational Christians, I think your affairs will be safe . . ." (Ep. 71).

SPINOZA TO OLDENBURG: " I received your very short letter of the 15th of November on Saturday last. You merely indicate in it the points in the *Theological Treatise* which have given pain to readers, whereas I had hoped to learn too which were the opinions in it you warned me about earlier which militated against the practice of religious virtue. However, I shall tell you frankly what I think on the three subjects you mention.

" As for the first, my opinions concerning God and Nature differ widely from those ordinarily maintained by modern Christians. For I hold that God is the immanent cause of all things, as the phrase is, not the transeunt one. I affirm with Paul that all things are in God and move in God, herein agreeing perhaps, though the phraseology is different, with all the ancient philosophers, possibly even, in so far as one may judge from their traditions, though these are in many ways corrupted, with all the ancient Hebrews. Those who think that the argument of the Treatise rests on the identification of God with nature, taking nature in the sense of a certain mass or corporeal matter, are entirely wrong.

" As regards miracles, I am of the contrary opinion that the truth of divine revelation can only be established by the wisdom of its doctrine, not by miracles, that is, by ignorance. This I have shown at sufficient length in the chapter (6) on miracles. I only add here that the chief distinction I make between religion and superstition is that superstition is founded on ignorance, religion on knowledge. This, I take it, is the reason why Christians

are distinguished from the rest of the world, not by faith or charity or the other fruits of the Holy Spirit, but solely by their opinions: it is because they defend their cause, like everyone else, by miracles, that is, by ignorance (which is the source of all malice), and thus turn a faith which may be true into a superstition. . . .

"Lastly, to give a clearer opinion on the third point, I say that I do not think it absolutely necessary for salvation to know Christ according to the flesh: but with regard to the eternal son of God, that is, God's eternal wisdom, which has manifested itself in all things and especially in the human mind and above all in Christ Jesus, we must think far otherwise. For without it no one can come to a state of blessedness, inasmuch as it alone teaches what is true and false, good and evil. And inasmuch as this wisdom was made especially manifest, as I have said, through Jesus Christ, his disciples preached it according as he himself revealed it to them directly, and thus showed that they could rejoice in that spirit of Christ more than the rest of mankind. As for the doctrine added to this by certain churches that God took upon himself the nature of man, I have expressly stated that I do not understand what they say; in fact, to tell the truth, they seem to me to speak no less absurdly than if one were to say that a circle had taken upon itself the nature of a square.

"This, I think, will be sufficient explanation of my opinions concerning the three points mentioned. Whether it will be satisfactory to the Christians whom you know, you will understand better than I . . ." (Ep. 73).

OLDENBURG TO SPINOZA: "As you seem to accuse me of excessive brevity, I shall avoid the charge this time by excessive prolixity. You expected, I see, that I should tabulate those opinions in your writings which seem to destroy the practice of religious virtue in your readers. I shall tell you the point which distresses them beyond

all else. You appear to set up a fatalistic necessity for all things and actions. If this is conceded and asserted, then, so they aver, the sinews of all laws and of all virtue and religion are severed and all rewards and punishments are vain. Whatsoever compels, or introduces necessity, is believed also to excuse; therefore no one, they think, can be without excuse in the sight of God. If we are driven by fate, and all things follow a fixed and inevitable path laid down by the hard hand of necessity, they do not see what place there is for blame and penalties. What wedge can be applied to loosen this tangle, it is very difficult to say, and I am very anxious to know and learn what help you can offer in the matter . . ." (Ep. 74).

SPINOZA TO OLDENBURG: ". . . Men are only without excuse before God because they are in God's power as clay is in the hand of the potter who from the same clay moulds some vessels for honour, some for dishonour. . . .[1] By this I mean [Ep. 78] that no one can bring a complaint against God for having given him a weak nature or an infirm spirit. A circle might as well complain to God that it had not been endowed with the properties of a sphere, or a child tortured with stone that it had not been given a healthy body, as a man of feeble spirit that God had denied him fortitude and the true knowledge and love of the Deity, or that he had endowed him with so weak a nature that he cannot restrain or moderate his desires. For there pertains to the nature of each thing only that which follows necessarily from its given cause. That every man cannot be brave, and that we can no more command for ourselves a healthy body than a healthy mind, cannot be denied without giving the lie both to experience and to reason. 'But,' you urge, 'if men sin

[1] Ep. 75 (the earlier part of the letter, which takes up Oldenburg's question about God and fate, repeats verbally Ep. 43, quoted above, pp. 170–1).

by the necessity of nature, they are excusable.' True, but you do not explain what conclusion you wish to draw from it. Is it that God cannot be angry with them, or is it that they are deserving of blessedness, that is, the knowledge and love of God? If you think the former, I fully admit that God is not angry, but that everything happens just as he wills; but I deny that all men are, on that account, bound to be blessed. Men may be excusable, and for all that be without blessedness and be afflicted in many ways. A horse is excusable for being a horse and not a man; but nevertheless it is a horse it must needs be and not a man. If a man goes mad from the bite of a dog he is certainly excusable, yet it is right that he should be suffocated.[1] In the same way, if a man cannot control his desires or keep them in check through fear of the laws, although his weakness is excusable, yet he cannot enjoy peace of mind and the knowledge and love of God, but necessarily perishes . . ." (Ep. 78).

(*B*)—Ethical

As one looks back on these criticisms, and they are from representative men, their tendency is evident. They all suggest that implicitly or explicitly Spinoza's conception of God is destructive of morality. Now it so happens that we have a complete exchange of letters on this most important topic; and in view of the fact that they put summarily the main points of Spinoza's practical philosophy, it will be best to quote from them freely.

The letters passed between Spinoza and William van Blyenbergh, a merchant of Dordrecht. The start was peaceable enough.

Blyenbergh to Spinoza (1665): "Sir and unknown Friend,—I have already read carefully several times your recently published treatise and its appendix [the *Principles*

[1] See above, p. 124 n.

of Descartes' Philosophy with its appendix, the *Metaphysical Thoughts*], and could tell others more becomingly than yourself of the extreme solidity I found in it and the pleasure I derived from it; although I cannot forbear saying that the more frequently I study it with attention, the more it pleases me, and I am constantly observing something in it which I had not remarked before. However, as I do not wish to appear to flatter, I shall not extol its author too loudly; I know that the gods grant all things to labour. But in order not to detain you too long with wondering who I may be, and how it comes to pass that one unknown to you takes the great liberty of writing to you, I shall tell you that he is a man who, impelled by a longing for pure and unadulterated truth, desires during this brief and frail life to fix his feet in the ways of science so far as our human faculties will allow; one who has no goal before his eyes in the pursuit of truth other than truth itself; one who seeks to obtain for himself by science neither honour nor riches, but simple truth, and tranquillity as the effect of truth; one who, of all truths and sciences, takes delight in none more than metaphysics, if not in all branches at any rate in some, and who sets the whole joy of his life in the fact that he can pass his hours of ease and leisure in the study of them. . . ." (Ep. 18, opening paragraph.)

The style is the man! Blyenbergh goes on to ask some rambling questions about free-will and the problem of evil.

Spinoza replied that he "valued above all things the joining of hands in friendship with sincere lovers of truth," and crystallised Blyenbergh's question into the dilemma: "Either there is no such thing as sin and evil, or God is their direct cause." He then continues:

"For my own part I cannot admit that sin and evil have any positive existence, much less that anything can exist or come to pass against the will of God. On the

contrary, not only do I assert that sin has no positive existence ; I even maintain that it is only when speaking inexactly and by human analogy that we can say that we sin against God, as in the expression 'men offend God.'

" As to the first point, we know that whatsoever exists, when considered in itself without regard to other things, possesses its own perfection, and that this perfection extends in each thing just so far as the limits of that thing's essence. . . . From this it may be understood that we can only conceive things as imperfect when we look at them in relation to other things which possess more reality. . . . For we admire in animals qualities which we regard with dislike and aversion in men, such as pugnacity in bees, jealousy in doves, and so on. In human beings these qualities are despised, but they are yet considered to enhance the perfection of animals. This being so, it follows clearly that sins (which indicate nothing but imperfection) cannot consist in anything which expresses reality. . . .

" Privation has no positive existence, and is only so named in respect of our understanding, not in respect of God's. It arises from the fact that we comprehend within one and the same definition all the individuals of one genus ; we call, for instance, by the one name all who have the outward appearance of men. Then we assume that all things which are covered by the one definition are equally capable of attaining the highest perfection which can be deduced from it, and when we find an individual the activities of which are not in accord with that perfection, we suppose it to be deprived of the perfection and to fall short of its own proper nature—a thing we should never do if we did not recall its general definition and ascribe to it the nature demanded by the definition. But as God does not know things through abstraction and does not frame general definitions of this

kind, and as things have no more reality than the divine understanding and power put into them and actually endowed them with, it clearly follows that privation has only meaning in relation to our intellect, not, however, in relation to God.

" Thus, as it seems to me, the difficulty is completely solved. However, in order to make the way plainer and remove every doubt, I think it necessary to answer the two following difficulties: First, why is it that Holy Scripture says that God requires the conversion of the wicked and why he forbade Adam to eat of the fruit when he had ordained the contrary? Secondly, it seems to follow from what I have said, that the wicked, with their pride, their avarice, their deeds of desperation and the like, worship God no less than do the righteous with their nobility, their patience and love, inasmuch as they both execute God's will.

" In answer to the first question I observe that Scripture, being chiefly suited for, and adapted to, the service of the multitude, speaks throughout popularly and after the fashion of men. . . .

" As regards the second, it is true that the wicked fulfil the will of God after their own manner; but they cannot for that reason be in any respect compared with the righteous. The more perfection a thing has, the more it participates in Deity (*magis de Deitate participat*),[1] and the more it expresses perfection. Since, then, the righteous have incomparably more perfection than the wicked, their virtue cannot be likened to the virtue of the wicked, inasmuch as the wicked lack the love of God which proceeds from the knowledge of God and by which alone, in accordance with our human understanding, we are called the servants of God. The wicked, indeed, knowing not God, are like instruments in the hand of the workman that serve unwittingly and are used up in the service.

[1] *Cf.* above, pp. 133, 153, 162.

The righteous, on the other hand, serve God with knowledge and, by serving him, come forth more perfect . . ." (Ep. 19).

Spinoza's reward for this is a letter (Ep. 20) running to fifteen pages of the *Opera Posthuma*, in the course of which Blyenbergh says that Spinoza's doctrine degraded men to the level of animals. Spinoza rejoined :

" I owe you the sincerest thanks for having made clear to me your philosophical opinions, but none at all for the doctrines which you attribute to me and seek to infer from my letter. What ground, I should like to know, has my letter afforded you for ascribing to me the opinions that men are like beasts, that they die and perish after the manner of beasts, that our actions are displeasing to God, and so on ? . . . For my part, did I not say plainly enough that the righteous worship God and in continually serving him become more perfect, and that they love God ? Is this to liken them to beasts, or to say that they perish like beasts or that their actions are displeasing to God ? If you had read my letter with more attention, you would have perceived clearly that our whole controversy lies in this one issue : Either the perfections which the righteous receive are imparted to them by God as God in the absolute sense of the word, that is, without any human qualities being ascribed to him—this is what I believe ; or else they are apportioned by God as judge, which is what you maintain. For this reason you defend the wicked, saying that they do whatever it lies in their power to do in compliance with God's decrees, and that therefore they serve God no less than the righteous. But on my view this consequence by no means follows. I do not introduce God as a judge, and therefore I value an action by its own quality, not by the power of the agent ; while the recompense which follows the action follows from it as necessarily as it follows from the nature of a triangle that its three angles are equal to two right angles.

" This will be clear to anybody who reflects on the fact that our highest blessedness consists in love towards God, and that such love flows naturally from the knowledge of God which is so strenuously enjoined on us. The point may very easily be demonstrated in general terms, if only attention is paid to the nature of God's decrees as explained in my Appendix [the *Metaphysical Thoughts* (II, cc. 7–9)]. However, I confess that all those who confuse the divine nature with that of man are truly incapable of understanding it."

He then goes on to explain the nature of negation and its consequences for the problem of free-will :

" I say then, first, that privation is not the act of depriving, but simply and solely a state of want which is in itself nothing : it is a mere entity of the reason or mode of thinking which we frame when we compare one thing with another. We say, for example, that a blind man is deprived of sight, because we readily imagine him as seeing, or compare him with others who can see, or compare his present condition with his past in which he could see ; when we regard the man in this way, comparing his nature either with the nature of others or with his own past nature, we affirm that vision pertains to his nature, and, further, that he has been deprived of it. But when we are considering the decree of God and his nature, we can no more affirm that the man is deprived of sight than a stone is, since, at that actual point of time, sight can be no more attributed to him without contradiction than to the stone. There belongs to man and forms part of his nature only that which is assigned to him by the understanding and will of God. Hence it follows that God is no more the cause of a blind man not seeing than he is of a stone not seeing. Not-seeing is a pure negation. So when we consider the case of a man who is led by lustful desires and compare his present desires with those which exist in good men or with those which existed in himself at some

other time, we then assert that he is deprived of the better desires, because we conceive that virtuous desires appertain to him as a part of his nature. But we cannot do this if we consider the nature of the divine decree and intellect. For, from this point of view, the better desires no more appertain to the nature of the lustful man at that time than to the nature of the devil or a stone. Hence, from this point of view the better desire is not a privation but a negation.

" Thus *privation* is nothing else than denying something of a thing which we judge to belong to its nature ; *negation* nothing else than denying something of a thing because it does not belong to the thing's nature.

" We can now understand why Adam's desire for earthly things was evil from the standpoint of our minds, not, however, from that of God. Although God knew both the present and the past state of Adam, he did not for that reason regard Adam as deprived of his past state, that is, he did not regard Adam's past state as appertaining to his present nature. Otherwise God would have apprehended something contrary to his own will, that is, contrary to his own understanding."

After some remarks on Descartes' account of the freedom of the will, he continues :

" When you say that by making men so much dependent on God I reduce them to the likeness of the elements, plants or stones, that is sufficient proof that you have thoroughly misunderstood my meaning and confounded things which are of the intellect with [things of] the imagination. If you had perceived by the pure understanding what dependence on God means, you certainly would not think that things, in so far as they depend on God, are dead, corporeal, and imperfect. Whoever dared to speak so meanly of the supremely perfect Being ? On the contrary, you would understand that they are perfect for that very reason and in so far as they do so depend on God . . .

" I cannot refrain from expressing my extreme astonishment that you should say that if God does not punish wrong-doing as a judge, that is, with a punishment not brought on by the offence itself (for that is our whole difference), there is nothing to prevent us from committing greedily every kind of wickedness. A man who avoids vice solely from the fear of punishment (which I hope is not the case with you), assuredly does not act in any wise from love and in no sense embraces virtue. For my part, I avoid, or endeavour to avoid, ill-conduct because it is at direct variance with my own particular nature and would lead me astray from the love and knowledge of God " (Ep. 21).

Blyenbergh this time is content with five (printed) pages (Ep. 22), ending up with a farrago of unintelligent questions. Spinoza replies with one of the clearest statements of his principles possible :

" I maintain, in the first place, that God is absolutely and truly the cause of all things, whatsoever they may be, which have essence. If you can demonstrate that evil, error, crime, and so on are anything which expresses essence, I shall fully grant you that God is the cause of crime, evil, and error. I believe, however, that I have shown sufficiently that that which constitutes the form of evil, error, and crime does not consist in anything which expresses essence, and that therefore they cannot be said to have God for their cause. Nero's matricide, for instance, in so far as it comprehended anything positive, was not a crime. The outward act and the matricidal intention were the same in the case of Orestes ; yet Orestes is not blamed—at any rate, not so much as Nero. What, then, was Nero's crime ? Nothing else but that by his deed he showed himself to be ungrateful, unmerciful, and disobedient. But it is certain that no one of these qualities expresses aught of essence ; therefore God was not the

cause of them, though he was the cause of Nero's act and intention.

"Further, I would have you observe that when we speak philosophically, we ought not to employ theological phrases. For since theology constantly, and not unwisely, represents God as a perfect man, it is right for it to say that God desires a certain thing, that he is angry at the actions of the wicked, and that he delights in those of the good. But in philosophy, when we clearly perceive that the attributes which make men perfect can as ill be ascribed and assigned to God as the attributes which constitute the perfection of the elephant and the ass can be ascribed to man, these and similar phrases have no place, nor can we employ them without causing extreme confusion in our conceptions. Hence, in the language of philosophy, it cannot be said that God desires anything of any man or that anything is displeasing or agreeable to him. For all these are human qualities which have no place in God.

"I would have it observed finally that although the actions of the good (that is, those who have a clear idea of God by which all their actions and thoughts are determined) and of the wicked (that is, those who do not possess the idea of God, but only the ideas of earthly things by which their actions and thoughts are determined), and indeed of every existing thing, flow necessarily from God's eternal laws and decrees and depend immediately upon God, yet they differ from one another not only in degree, but also in essence. A mouse no less than an angel, and sorrow no less than joy, depend on God; yet a mouse is not a kind of angel, nor is sorrow a kind of joy. I think I have by this answered your objections, that is, if I rightly understand them; for I sometimes doubt whether the conclusions which you deduce from them are the same as the proposition which you design to prove.

"However, the matter will be more clear if I answer

the questions you proposed in the light of these principles. You asked first, whether murder is as acceptable to God as the giving of alms ; second, whether stealing is as good in relation to God as an honest life ; third and last, whether, if a person should exist of such a character that it would agree with, rather than be repugnant to, his own particular nature to follow his desires and to commit crimes, any rational motive could be assigned why he should do good and avoid evil.

" To the first question I answer that I do not know, speaking as a philosopher, what you mean by the words 'acceptable to God.' If you ask whether God does not hate the wicked and love the good or whether the wicked has not caused annoyance to God while the good has done him favours, I answer, No. If the question is whether murderers are of the same goodness and perfection as those who distribute alms, my answer is again in the negative.

" To your second question I reply : If the phrase ' good in relation to God ' means that the honest man confers a benefit on God while the thief does him an injury, I answer that neither the honest man nor the thief can cause God any pleasure or displeasure. If the question is whether the actions of each, in so far as they are anything real and are caused by God, are equally perfect, I reply that, if we merely regard the actions and the manner of their execution, both may be equally perfect. If then you ask whether the thief and the honest man are equally perfect and blessed, I answer, No. For by an honest man I mean one who always desires that everyone should possess that which is his own. This desire, as I prove in my *Ethics* (as yet unpublished), necessarily derives its origin in the righteous from the clear knowledge which they possess of God and of themselves ; and since a thief has no such desire, he is necessarily without the knowledge of God and of himself—that is, he is without the principal thing

which makes us men (*primario quod nos homines reddit*). If you ask further what it is which can move you to perform an action which I call virtuous, rather than another, I reply, that I cannot know which way God chooses out of the infinite variety open to him to determine you to that action. It may well be that God has impressed upon you so clear an idea of himself that you forget the world for love of him and love your fellow-men as yourself. Such a disposition, it is plain, is repugnant to those dispositions which are called bad and could not therefore co-exist with them in the same man. . . .

"Your third question assumes a contradiction. It seems to me to be as though one were to ask whether, if it agreed better with a man's nature that he should hang himself, any reason could be given for his not hanging himself. Granted the possibility that a man with such a nature could exist, I maintain, apart altogether from the question of free will, that if a man sees that he can live more fittingly on the gallows than seated at his own table, he would act most foolishly if he did not hang himself. Anyone who saw clearly that he would enjoy a really more perfect and better life or essence by committing crimes than by the practice of virtue, would be foolish if he did not commit the crimes. For, in respect of so perverted a human nature, crime would be its virtue . . ." (Ep. 23).

(*C*)—Metaphysical

The objections we have now to consider are of a very different character. They are directed not against the results, theoretical or practical, of Spinoza's thought, but against their metaphysical basis. They are the work of a keen-witted Silesian nobleman of the name of Tschirnhaus who became acquainted with Spinoza in the last years of his life through their common friend, Schuller.

They turn round two principal problems, that of the infinity of the attributes and the place within them of the attribute of Thought, and that of the nature of Extension and its connexion with the particular objects of our experience.

SCHULLER TO SPINOZA (1675): "Our noble friend, Tschirnhaus [writing from England][1] . . . bids me request from you the solution of the following questions . . . Can you convince him by some positive proof, not by a reduction to the impossible, that we cannot know any more attributes of God than Thought and Extension alone? Further, does it follow from that that creatures constituted under other attributes can form no idea of Extension? If so, it would seem that there must be as many worlds as there are attributes of God, worlds made up of other attributes which would yet be of the same amplitude as our world of Extension, and in which creatures would perceive nothing besides the special attribute of that world and Thought just as we in our world perceive nothing but Extension and Thought. . . .

"Again you say (in *Ethics* I, 10 sch.) that 'nothing in nature is clearer than that every entity must be conceived under some attribute' (this I understand quite well), and that 'the more it has of reality or being, the more attributes appertain to it.' It seems to follow from this that there are entities possessing three, four, or more attributes, though we gather from what has been demonstrated that every being consists only of two attributes, namely, a certain attribute of God and the idea of that attribute . . ." (Ep. 63).

SPINOZA TO SCHULLER: "To your first question I answer that the human mind can only acquire knowledge of those things which are involved in the idea of an actually

[1] See below, p. 202.

existing body, or of what can be inferred from such an idea. For the power of anything is defined solely by its essence (Eth. III, 7). But the essence of the mind (II, 13) consists solely in that it is the idea of an actually existing body; therefore the mind's power of understanding only extends to things which this idea of body contains in itself or which follow from it. Now this idea of body does not involve or express any of God's attributes other than Extension and Thought. For its object (*ideatum*), namely, body (II, 6), has God for its cause in so far as he is regarded under the attribute of Extension and not under any other; therefore (by I, axiom 6) this idea of the body involves the knowledge of God only in so far as he is considered under the attribute of Extension. Further, this idea, in so far as it is a mode of thinking, has also (by the same proposition) God for its cause in so far as he is regarded as a thinking thing and not in so far as he is considered under any other attribute. Hence (by the same axiom) the idea of this idea involves the knowledge of God in so far as he is considered under the attribute of Thought and not under any other attribute. It is therefore plain that the human mind, or the idea of the human body, neither involves nor expresses any attributes of God save these two. Now from these two attributes or their modifications no other attribute of God can be inferred or conceived (I, 10). I conclude, therefore, that the human mind cannot acquire knowledge of any attribute of God besides these. . . .

"With regard to your further question, whether there must be as many worlds as there are attributes, I refer you to the scholium of *Ethics* II, 7 [quoted in part above, pp. 87–8]" (Ep. 64).

TSCHIRNHAUS TO SPINOZA: "I should like a demonstration of your theorem that the soul cannot perceive any more attributes of God than Extension and Thought.

For though, as I see it, it is manifestly true, yet it appears to me that the contrary may be deduced from the scholium to *Ethics* II, 7, to which you refer, perhaps because I do not perceive the meaning of that passage correctly. So I have made up my mind to show you how I make the deduction, and I beg you earnestly to help me with your usual courtesy wherever I do not rightly grasp your meaning.

" This is the point : though I gather that the universe is undoubtedly one, it is none the less clear also from the very passage referred to that it is expressed in an infinity of ways, and therefore that every single thing is expressed in an infinity of ways. From this it seems to follow that although the modification constituting my mind and the modification constituting my body are one and the same modification, it is yet expressed in an infinity of ways —once under Thought, a second time under Extension, a third under some attribute of God unknown to me, and so on to infinity ; seeing that there are an infinity of attributes in God and the order and connection of the modifications seem to be the same in all. Here then the question arises why the mind, which represents a certain modification (a modification which is expressed not only in Extension, but also in an infinity of other ways), perceives that modification only as expressed through Extension (that is, the human body), and no other expression of it under any other attribute . . ." (Ep. 65).

The question is put very clearly. Why is it that we have no knowledge of the modes under other attributes than those of Thought and Extension ? Spinoza replies :

" In answer to your objection I say, that although each particular thing is expressed in an infinity of ways in the infinite understanding of God, yet those infinite ideas whereby it is expressed cannot constitute one and the same mind of a particular thing, but infinite minds (*illæ*

tamen infinitæ ideæ, quibus exprimitur, unam eandemque rei singularis mentem constituere nequeunt) ; seeing that each of these infinite ideas has no connection with the rest, as I have explained in the same scholium to *Ethics* II, 7, and as is also evident from I, 10. If you will reflect on these passages a little, you will see that no difficulty remains . . . " (Ep. 66).

We may reflect on these passages a great deal, but the difficulty does not seem to vanish,[1] and Tschirnhaus returns at once to the attack :

" . . . But according to that the attribute of Thought is pronounced to extend much more widely (*multo latius*) than the other attributes. Since, however, every one of the attributes constitutes the essence of God, I do not quite see how this can be . . ." (Ep. 70).

Further answer to this question is not forthcoming—Spinoza evidently had said all that he had to say—and the letters go on to points of physics. They are of the first importance, as showing Spinoza's attitude towards the physical principles of Descartes.

Tschirnhaus to Spinoza : " I have great difficulty in conceiving how it can be proved, *a priori*, that bodies exist having motion and figure, seeing that in Extension in the absolute sense nothing of the kind is met with . . ." (Ep. 80).

Spinoza to Tschirnhaus : " . . . From Extension as Descartes conceives it, that is, a quiescent mass, it is not only difficult, as you say, but absolutely impossible, to prove the existence of bodies. For matter at rest will continue at rest so far as lies in itself, and will only be impelled to motion by some more powerful external cause ; for this reason I did not hesitate to affirm long ago that

[1] But *cf.* below, p. 198 n.

the Cartesian principles in physics are useless, not to say absurd . . ." (Ep. 81).

TSCHIRNHAUS TO SPINOZA: "I wish you would gratify me in this matter by pointing out how the variety of the universe can be shown *a priori* from Extension as *you* conceive it. . . . I ask the question because I know that you have other thoughts on the matter; although perhaps there are some weighty reasons for your unwillingness to disclose your opinion hitherto . . ." (Ep. 82).

SPINOZA TO TSCHIRNHAUS: "As to your question whether the variety of the universe can be deduced *a priori* from the conception of Extension alone, I think I have already shown clearly enough that it is impossible to do so, and that for this reason Descartes was wrong in defining matter as Extension, but it must necessarily be explained through an attribute which expresses eternal and infinite essence. Perhaps I may discuss the subject with you more clearly some day if my life is prolonged, for hitherto I have not been able to put any of these matters into due order . . ." (Ep. 83).

The correspondence ends, no doubt owing to Spinoza's failing health (he died early in the next year). It contains in brief most of the criticisms ever advanced against Spinoza's metaphysical scheme. The points it turns round, first, the infinity of the attributes and the place within them of the attribute of Thought, and second, the nature of Extension and its connexion with the things of our experience, remain crucial. Of the former we can only say that Spinoza evidently thought that he had meant, and had said, something very simple—unfortunately, nobody since has been able to show exactly what it is (a recent and interesting attempt has been made by S. Alexander in an incidental section of his *Spinoza and*

Time).[1] With regard to the latter it is important to note that Spinoza definitely rejected the principles of the Cartesian physics, and that on grounds akin to those developed afterwards by Leibniz. We can only regret that the promised working out of his hints was prevented by his death; but the few remarks which he does let drop certainly give colour to the modern gloss on his doctrine to which attention has been directed already (above, p. 83). In any case his summary dismissal of the basic principle of Cartesian physics must be borne in mind when the general question is considered of the relationship between his philosophy and that of Descartes.

[1] London, Allen & Unwin, 1921, § 6 (to be added to the otherwise seemingly exhaustive list of solutions given by Egon v. Petersdorff in his paper *Spinoza's Unendliche Attribute Gottes* in *Chron. Spin.* II). Prof. Alexander thinks that "Spinoza's critics have . . . forgotten that what we humans can perceive in the ultimate substance depends upon the empirical character of our bodies, on our particular distribution of motion and rest, and correspondingly of thought" (p. 56). "We cannot therefore be sure that the x-correspondent of my idea of the table gives me the perception of the x-table. It might, for instance, be possible that in order to have perception of the x-table there was needed another body composed, say, of half my body and half yours, or of my body and a stone. The x-correspondent of my body in perceiving the table may be only a part of the x-mode which is necessary for the perception of the x-table, which perception consequently would belong to a quite different mind from mine. In other words, a different distribution of matter or rather of motion may be required for the purpose than is afforded by that particular distribution which constitutes my human body" (p. 54 f.; the exegesis of Spinoza's letter to Tschirnhaus follows, p. 55 f., stress being laid on the sentence *illæ tamen infinitæ ideæ*, etc., quoted above, p. 196).

II

SPINOZA IN EUROPEAN THOUGHT FROM LEIBNIZ TO HEGEL

ALTHOUGH research has demonstrated that Spinoza's work did not, as is often stated, fall into complete oblivion for a full hundred years after his death, it would yet seem to be true that its influence was slight during the major portion of that period. Such as it was, it may be traced in England as much as elsewhere. All the great English metaphysicians had some slight contact with him. Hobbes, we are told, on being shown a copy of the *Opera Posthuma* said: "Judge not that ye be not judged." Locke was accused of having "endeavoured to establish Spinoza's atheistical hypothesis." Berkeley actually read him, and made reference to specific texts as well as definite doctrines of the *Ethics* and the *Correspondence*. Hume has a discussion, probably resting on information at second hand, of the "hideous hypothesis" of that "famous atheist." But it must be remembered that all through this hundred years Spinoza's name was connected principally not with the *Ethics* but with the *Theological-Political Treatise*. A complete English translation of the Treatise was published in 1689, while a version of the chapter on Miracles (6) appeared still earlier, in 1683.[1] It soon elicited refutations, the most famous of which was by Clarke in

[1] A French version, under various false titles, appeared in 1678. There is also an early French version of the *Ethics* from the hands of Count Henri de Boulainvilliers (1658-1722; author of *a Réfutation de Spinoza*, published posthumously at Brussels in 1731, and *Analyse du Traité théologico-politique*, published at London in 1767), but it remained in manuscript until 1907, when it was printed by F. Colonna d'Istria (Paris, Armand Colin).

his Boyle Lectures (1704) on the *Being and Attributes of God*; yet Clarke himself, so it has been said,[1] "might be more accurately described as following the argument of Spinoza up to the point where its logic becomes irreconcilable with the ordinary theism." England at the time was the home of the free ideas which were soon to become the inspiration of Continental 'enlightenment,' and its characteristic product was Deism. Yet, to quote the same authority again (I, 33), "the whole essence of the deist position may be found in Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*. A few of the philosopher's pages have expanded into volumes and libraries of discussion; but the germs of the whole discussion are present. Few of the deists,[2] it is probable, read his works; the name of Spinoza was, of course, dreaded by them; they take care both to avoid the imputation and to make it undeserved by carefully scotching their logic. The immutable chain of causation recognised by Spinoza is summarily broken off by the dogmatic assertion of Free-will which became a mark of the whole deist and semi-deist school. The legitimate descent of their theories is none the less manifest. . . ." The picture would, if anything, seem to be *under*-drawn, for Berkeley (*Alciphron* [1732], vii; Works, ed. 1901, II, p. 362) still calls Spinoza "the great leader of our modern infidels."

[1] Leslie Stephen: *English Thought in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1876), I, p. 120 f. For Hobbes, Locke, Berkeley and Hume, see Aubrey's *Life of Hobbes*, I, p. 357 (ap. Tönnies: Thomas Hobbes, ed. 2, 1912, p. 230, n. 48); Fraser's *Locke's Essay concerning Human Understanding* (Oxford, 1894) II, p. 316, n. 2 and Sorley's *History of English Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1920), p. 344, s.v. William Carroll; Berkeley's *Commonplace Book* (ed. Fraser, 1902), pp. 52–4, and many incidental references; Hume's *Treatise*, I, part iv, section 5 (from a note it appears he drew from Bayle).

[2] Notable exceptions are John Toland, the first, so far as is known, to use the word 'pantheism,' who although he wrote against Spinoza in the course of his *Letters to Serena* (1704), spoke of him memorably as a "great and a good man"; and probably Shaftesbury himself, of whom it has been said by a recent editor: "His philosophy, as regards its basis, is drawn more or less directly from Spinoza" (*Shaftesbury's Characteristicks*, ed. J. M. Robertson, London, 1900, I, p. xxxi).

There is nothing comparable in other countries to this influence of Spinoza on English Deism (and through it on the whole course of the development of modern rationalism). There are many mentions of his name, but on the whole he is to be written down, in the opinion of the time, as "little read and still less understood" (Lg. p. 229, l. 18; p. 215, ll. 18–9). The hostility he aroused in his lifetime seems to have passed into indifference soon after his death. His reputation settled down. He is just "the systematiser of atheism" (so Bayle sums him up in his Dictionary, the repository of the wisdom of the age); while his philosophy is "a hypothesis the most monstrous, the most absurd and the most diametrically opposed to the most evident notions of our mind which can be imagined." The one interesting point which emerges from Bayle's account is the definite turn given to the Spinoza legend. The free-thinkers were only too glad to be able to point to Spinoza in proof of their thesis that moral living was not the monopoly of theological orthodoxy. They therefore emphasised at once the 'saintly' character of Spinoza's life and the 'perniciousness' of his opinions. This note appears still in Voltaire's *Letter on Spinoza* (*Œuvres*, ed. 1785, vol. 47, p. 406 ff.). We must "abhor his atheism," he tells us, but admire his personality.

Before we turn to the one thinker of the first rank who was capable of understanding Spinoza, and who not only studied his writings but also came into personal contact with him, we may note that the *Theological-Political Treatise* exerted an important influence in a sphere other than that of philosophy. Those portions of it which dealt with the origin and character of Biblical texts stimulated the taste for scientific investigation, and took no small part in the creation of that attitude towards written authority which is one of the characteristic signs of the modern mind. "Much of what he has to say about the

author of the Pentateuch and other points of history and criticism," wrote Jean Le Clerc (Lg. p. 210), "is not only true; it is obvious to anybody who weighs the matter without preconceived opinions. Indeed it is the one key to the understanding of many places of Scripture." How much Le Clerc, and Richard Simon himself, drew from Spinoza is a matter of special inquiry. It has been held to be very much indeed, so much, in fact, that Spinoza has been called not only their precursor in the realm of Biblical studies, but even the real founder of modern criticism.[1]

Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz (1646–1716), the great light of the coming generation, had entered into communication with Spinoza on a point of mathematical optics in November 1671, and Spinoza had returned a courteous answer and had offered him a copy of the *Theological-Political Treatise* (Ep. 45–6). Four years later Spinoza's friend Tschirnhaus was in England (where, incidentally, he seems to have been the cause of Oldenburg's renewing his long-interrupted correspondence with Spinoza), and from England crossed to France and stayed in Paris. The rest of the story may be told in the words of their common friend, Schuller:

"He mentions that he found at Paris a man called Leibniz, remarkably learned, and most skilled in various sciences, as also free from the vulgar prejudices of theology. He has formed an intimate acquaintance with him, founded on the fact that Leibniz labours with him to pursue the perfection of the intellect, and, in truth, reckons nothing better or more useful. Tschirnhaus says that he is most practised in ethics, and speaks, without any impulse

[1] Karppe: *Essais de Critique et d'Histoire de Philosophie*, Paris, Alcan, 1902, p. 135 ff.; Luigi Fossati in *Rivista di Filosofia*, xviii (1927), p. 234.

derived from the passions, from the dictates of reason alone. He adds that he is most skilled in physics, and also in metaphysical studies concerning God and the soul. Finally, he concludes that he is most worthy, if you will accord the permission, of having your writings communicated to him, for he believes, as he promises to show at length if you so desire, that you will derive great advantage from his criticisms.

" If you do not wish this Leibniz to see your writings, be assured that our friend will honourably keep them concealed as he has promised. As a matter of fact, he has as yet not made the slightest mention of them. Leibniz also highly values the *Theological-Political Treatise*, on the subject of which he once wrote you a letter, if he is not mistaken. I would therefore beg you, unless there is some reason against him, not to refuse your permission in accordance with your gracious kindness, but, if possible, to open your mind to me as soon as may be, for after receiving your answers I shall be able to reply to our friend Tschirnhaus " (Ep. 70).

Spinoza returned a strikingly cautious reply :

" I believe I have corresponded with the Leibniz he mentions. But why he, who was a counsellor at Frankfort, has gone to France, I do not know. So far as I could conjecture from his letters, he seemed to me a man of liberal mind and versed in every science. But yet I think it imprudent to entrust my writings to him so soon. I should like first to know what his business is in France, and what our friend Tschirnhaus thinks of him when he has been longer in his company and knows his character more intimately " (Ep. 72).

Spinoza's suspicions of Leibniz were shrewd. Intellectually, Leibniz was one of the most gifted men of any age, but in his dealings with Spinoza, at least, he seems to have behaved badly. As a matter of fact, he came to the Hague to see Spinoza in 1676, had long discussions with

him, and carried off, at least for a few days, a manuscript copy of the *Ethics*. When Spinoza died (1677), Leibniz was all eagerness to procure his works, and for nearly a decade after their publication made a special and profound study of them. Yet from the first, presumably from reasons of prudence, he disavowed any connexion with Spinoza. He was very annoyed that his name had been allowed to appear in the very harmless letter from himself (Ep. 45) which was published in Spinoza's *Opera Posthuma*, and he seems never to have spoken of Spinoza except slightingly, and deliberately to have concealed his obligations to him.

Exactly how far the debt went it is difficult to determine. On the face of it Leibniz' philosophy is the very antithesis of Spinoza's. Spinoza denied that anything existed 'without commerce' (above, p. 27) or connexion with others; that is to say, he held there was only one thing, the unitary system of all things. Leibniz asserted that there was nothing at all which had 'commerce' with anything else; everything which exists exists in a self-subsistent isolation. His thought is thus as fundamentally pluralistic as is Spinoza's monistic. What this difference means may be illustrated by a somewhat hackneyed reference to Tennyson's lines on the *Flower in the Crannied Wall*:

> "Flower in the crannied wall,
> I pluck you out of the crannies;
> Hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
> Little flower—but if I could understand
> What you are, root and all, all in all,
> I should know what God and man is."

For Spinoza this would be true. All things are involved with one another, so that, if we knew everything about any one thing, we should know everything about everything. This Leibniz denies. For Leibniz, every single entity is closed up within itself, "without doors or

windows," in his own striking phrase. Hence, any information we may have about it (the constant miracle of the 'pre-established harmony' aside) tells us only about it alone. The universe is made up of unconnected individuals.

Such an antithesis of doctrine would be final if one significant point were not noticed. All that Leibniz says about his many individual things is the same as what Spinoza says about the one thing. The movement of thought is, of course, quite understandable, and, curiously enough, has an exact parallel in the history of Ancient Philosophy in the dependence of Atomism on Eleaticism (see Burnet's *Early Greek Philosophy*, ed. 3, London, 1920, pp. vi and 333 ff.). Nor is there any reason why Leibniz should not have made his own use of Spinoza. What he ought not to have done, however, was to go out of his way at every opportunity to discredit the source from which he drew. And he drew and adapted much. His theory of soul, of the pre-established harmony, of liberty, of perfection, depend closely on specific points in Spinoza's doctrine; while his central concept of the fundamental place of activity (*esse=agere*) is one of the most important, although usually neglected, sides of Spinoza's general point of view. Leibniz' reflections seem to have been strongly influenced by Spinoza as a consequence of the conversations he had with him in 1676 (it is characteristic of the whole story that the nature and importance of these conversations, concealed by Leibniz himself, have only come to light in recent times).[1] But after the appearance of the Ethics (1677), so a recent student asserts (Piat, *Leibniz*, Paris, Alcan, 1915), his thought "was completely penetrated by Spinoza's leading ideas. . . . In fact, and in spite of the orthodoxy of his formulas, Leibniz remained to the very end a prisoner to the genius of the Hague" (pp. 257–8).

[1] See the very thorough discussion, on the basis of newly discovered documents, by L. Stein in his *Leibniz und Spinoza*, Berlin, 1890.

M. Piat goes so far as to say that Leibniz had two philosophies. One (that of the *Theodicy* and the *Monadology*), for popular consumption; the other, consisting of a "clear-cut affirmation of all the principles of Spinozism," for himself. This question concerns the student of Leibniz rather than that of Spinoza and may be passed over here. It is more to our present purpose to see what impression Leibniz desired to convey of his attitude towards Spinoza.

We may take some representative passages from different periods of his development; the first from a letter of 1678 published by Prof. Stein:

"The posthumous works of the late Monsieur Spinoza have at last been published. I have found in them a number of good ideas akin to my own, as is known to some of my friends [*i.e.* Tschirnhaus] who were also friends of Spinoza. But they also contain paradoxes which I find neither true nor even plausible. For example, that there is only one substance, namely God; that created things are modes or accidents of God; that our mind can see nothing more after this life; that God himself thinks, but does not understand or will; that everything comes to pass by a certain fatal necessity; that God acts not for ends but by some necessity of nature—which is to retain providence and immortality verbally but really to give them up. I think the book dangerous for such as will give themselves the trouble to go into it thoroughly. . . ." (*Op. cit.*, pp. 307–8).

This piece dates from February 1678, and gives expression to his first public attitude towards Spinoza. Another passage, of some twenty years later (1697), is interesting because of its well-known pronouncement on the connexion between Spinoza and Descartes: "If what he says is sound" [the reference is to a certain Abbé Faydit], "it follows that there is neither freedom nor providence; that what does not happen is impossible, and that what

does happen is necessary, just as Hobbes and Spinoza say in clearer terms. One can say, too, that Spinoza did nothing but cultivate certain seeds of Descartes' philosophy" (Lg. p. 218; Works, ed. Gerhardt, vol. II, p. 563).

The concentration on the one point of Spinoza's 'fatalism' comes out most clearly in the *Theodicy* (1710): ". . . The kingdom of God is nothing else in Spinoza than the kingdom of necessity and of a blind necessity (as in Strato), through which everything emanates from the divine nature without there being any choice in God and without the choice of man exempting him from necessity. . . ." (Lg. p. 235; *Theod.* III, § 372.)

The trend of the criticisms is clear. Spinoza's thoroughgoing determinism is held to be destructive of all the values held precious by humanity. This judgment, which only repeats what less qualified men had said, and to which, incidentally, Leibniz' own system is open equally,[1] became by historical accident of great importance. It fixed opinion for a century, particularly in Germany. For the unsystematic Leibniz found a systematic follower in Christian Wolff. Wolff introduced a refutation of the Leibnitian Spinoza in his course on philosophy.[2] The chairs of philosophy in all the German universities were soon occupied by Wolff's pupils. The refutation became stereotyped, and Spinoza was dismissed unread.

The rehabilitation came in a striking manner. Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi (1743–1819) had come to the not particularly novel conclusion that philosophy was entirely one-sided, and proposed, therefore, to re-establish in its

[1] For the "theoretical opposition and practical identity" between Leibniz and Spinoza, particularly as regards the ethical problem, see H. Wildon Carr: *The Unique Status of Man* (Macmillan, 1928), cap. II, especially pp. 75–7.

[2] *Theologia Naturalis*, II (1737), §§ 671–716, reprinted from the German version of J. L. Schmidt (1744) in Scholz: *Die Hauptschriften zum Pantheismusstreit zwischen Jacobi und Mendelssohn*, Berlin, 1916.

stead the feelings of the ordinary man. Now he had early become acquainted with Spinoza's work through Wolff's refutation, but unlike most of his contemporaries he had been at pains to go to the fountain-head. The conviction soon dawned on him that Spinoza was the pattern philosopher. As George Henry Lewes was to say a century later: "With Spinoza there is no choice. If you understand his terms, admit the possibility of his science, and see his meaning, you can no more doubt his conclusions than you can doubt Euclid" (*Biographical History of Philosophy*, Modern Series, Second Epoch, c. 6). Jacobi went still further. He maintained that all philosophies, if they were followed out, would lead logically to Spinozism. Spinoza, in fact, had been the only philosopher who had had the courage to take philosophy seriously. If, then, we are to be philosophers, there is no alternative: we can only be Spinozists.

Spinozism, then, is the pure type of philosophy. But, and here the argument takes a fresh and unexpected turn, its results are inacceptable. Therefore, said Jacobi, the 'head' (typified by Spinozism) does not lead to truth. We must return, therefore, to the 'heart.'

The double character of the argument, luminously exposed by M. Lucien Lévy-Bruhl in his volume on Jacobi (Paris, Alcan, 1894, cap. 6), is notable. Jacobi insisted on the rigorous character of Spinoza's system precisely in order to discredit it; or rather, since it was the essence of philosophy, in order to discredit philosophy as such. His admiration for Spinoza was quite sincere, and he certainly made a profound study of his work; but with many other more modern readers he could not stomach what seemed to him to be Spinoza's fatalism. Now he held that this fatalism, far from being peculiar to Spinoza, is the logical consequence of any attempt to *think* things out. Thought as such is determinist (a similar position has been maintained in our own day by

M. Bergson), and if we are to reject determinism, as in his opinion we must, we must reject the claim of thought to be the sole arbiter of what is true and real. We must abandon reason and rest in an act of faith.

Again, the idea is not new, but it was of especial significance in the intellectual atmosphere of the day. This was formed under the influence of easy-going popularisers who had a ready-made solution for everything. These 'philosophers of the Enlightenment,' as they were called, were soon to be dethroned by Kant, but the first protest against them came from Jacobi. Jacobi had learned what reasoning meant from a man of sterner stuff. Nor was his experience isolated. An interesting passage in the *Autobiography* of the erratic genius, Solomon Maimon, to whom Kant's philosophy owed much of its further development, tells the same story. "I was reading Spinoza," he writes, "and his profound thought and his love of truth pleased me uncommonly. . . . I began to reflect on his system anew and became convinced of its truth. . . . I answered all the objections brought against it by the Wolffians, brought objections against their system myself, and showed that if the 'nominal definitions' of the Wolffian Ontology are converted into real ones, conclusions the very opposite of theirs are the result. Moreover, I could not explain the persistency of the Wolffians in adhering to their system except as a political device and a piece of hypocrisy by which they studiously endeavoured to descend to the mode of thinking common in the popular mind. . . ." (cap. 23, end; E.T., pp. 219–20.) The close thought of Spinoza constituted, in fact, a challenge to the intellectual leaders of the time, and an accident made the challenge heard.

That accident was the death of Lessing (in 1781), which led his friend Moses Mendelssohn to set about the preparation of a book on his life and opinions. Now Lessing was one of the few people in Germany besides Jacobi who had

read Spinoza, and he not only read but admired him, although he does not seem to have cared to spread the fact abroad. Jacobi, who had some conversations with him on the subject a year before his death, thought that he ought to mention the fact to Mendelssohn ; and he did. The result was surprising. Mendelssohn at once repudiated what he considered to be an accusation, and, after some correspondence, devoted a section (15) of his *Morgenstunden* (1785) to a public denial of the charge. In the meantime Jacobi had prepared and published a volume, in the form of letters to Mendelssohn (*Ueber die Lehre des Spinoza*, 1785), in which he gave an account of Spinoza's philosophy and in the course of which he reproduced from memory the conversations which he had with Lessing in 1780. It appears that Lessing had actually said that Spinoza was his master, and that Spinoza's philosophy was the only philosophy. Further, the whole conversation had arisen over a discussion of a poem of *Goethe*. Goethe too ! The whole intellectual world was at once ablaze. From being a " dead dog," as Lessing had put it, Spinoza became an object of reverential worship. " Offer up a lock of hair in honour of the spirit of the holy outcast," Schleiermacher was soon to say. " The sublime world-spirit penetrated him. The infinite was his beginning and end, the universe his only and eternal love."

What was it that these men found in Spinoza ?—and it must be remembered that the cult was shared not only by the professed philosophers but also by the great poets and literary artists of that great literary and artistic age. We have the answer in some striking phrases of Jacobi in his original talk with Lessing : a ' bright, pure mind,' a ' tranquillity of spirit,' a ' Heaven in the understanding ' (*Eine solche Ruhe des Geistes einen solchen Himmel im Verstande, wie sich dieser helle reine Kopf geschaffen hatte, mögen wenige gekostet haben*). The very severity of his style captivated. The age was one of

sentiment and superficiality. Spinoza's was a sober voice. " What the book [Spinoza's *Ethics*] may have given to me," Goethe wrote in his autobiography, " or what I may have put into it of my own, it is impossible for me to say. Enough that I found here that which stilled the emotions : a wide and free prospect over the physical and moral world disclosed itself before me. But what chiefly drew me to Spinoza was the boundless unselfishness that shone forth in every sentence. That marvellous saying : ' He who truly loves God must not expect God to love him in return,' with all the propositions that support it, all the consequences that flow from it, was the burden of all my thoughts. To be unselfish in everything, most of all in love and friendship, was my highest pleasure, my rule of life, my exercise ; so that my foolhardy saying of a later time : ' If I love you, what is that to you ? ' was truly felt by me when I wrote it. I must not forget to acknowledge in this case as in others the truth that the closest unions are the result of contrast. The serene level of Spinoza stood out against my striving endeavour in all directions ; his mathematical method was the complement of my poetical way of observation and description ; and his formal treatment, which some could not think appropriate to moral subjects, was just what made me learn from him with eagerness and admire him without reserve."

This well-known passage[1] recounts experiences of 1773–4. Goethe returned to the earnest study of Spinoza at least twice again, once in the period 1783–6, once much later in 1811–6, each time to speak of the peace of mind and clearness of vision which the study gave him. We shall see later some other utterances of his on the subject which are perhaps of even greater significance ; but this experience of his is so representative[2] that it is worth

[1] *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, III, 14 (I have borrowed Pollock's version in his *Spinoza*, pp. 369–70).

[2] *Cf.* above, p. 163.

while recalling on it the words of the great critic who knew much both of Spinoza himself and of Goethe: "... The two things which are most remarkable about Spinoza and by which, I think, he chiefly impressed Goethe, seems to me to be ... his denial of final causes and his Stoicism, a Stoicism not passive but active. For a mind like Goethe's—a mind profoundly impartial and passionately aspiring after the sciences not of men only but of universal nature—the popular philosophy which explains all things by reference to man and regards universal nature as existing for the sake of man and even of certain classes of men, was utterly repulsive. ... Creation, he thought, should be made of sterner stuff .... More than any philosopher who has ever lived, Spinoza satisfied him here: *God directs Nature according as the universal laws of nature, but not according as the particular laws of human nature, require; and so God has regard not of the human race only, but of entire nature.*

"As a pendant to this denial by Spinoza of final causes, comes his Stoicism: *Our desire is not that nature may obey us, but on the contrary that we may obey nature.*

"Here is the second source of his attractiveness for Goethe; and Goethe is but the eminent representative of a whole order of minds whose admiration has made Spinoza's fame. Spinoza first impresses Goethe and any man like Goethe, and then he composes him; first fills and satisfies his imagination by the width and grandeur of his view of nature, and then he fortifies and stills his mobile, straining, passionate, poetic temperament by the moral lessons he draws from his view of nature, and a moral lesson not of mere resigned acquiescence, not of melancholy quietism, but of joyful activity within the limits of man's true sphere." [1]

Spinoza, then, gave to Goethe and his generation the

[1] Arnold: *Essays in Criticism*, I, pp. 332–4 (abridged).

serenity of mind which they failed to find elsewhere. But Goethe himself, when he came back to Spinoza in his after years, saw in him something else as well. If the motto of the earlier study is the proposition: "he who loves God cannot strive that God should love him in return" (Eth. V, 19), that of the later is: "the more we understand individual objects, the more we understand God"—*Quo magis res singulares intelligimus, eo magis Deum intelligimus* (V, 29). "I see the Divine being," he writes (9th June 1785), in words which are clearly reminiscent of Spinoza, "only in and through individual things (*nur in und aus den* rebus singularibus), and although it would seem that at Spinoza's glance all particular things melt away, no one can, in fact, encourage us to a nearer and deeper contemplation of them than Spinoza himself." And again, (to Jacobi, 21st October 1785): "When you say, we can only *believe* in God, I say to you, I lay stress on *observation* (*aufs Schauen*); and when Spinoza speaks of *intuitive knowledge* and says, *this kind of knowledge proceeds from the adequate idea of the formal essence of some of the attributes of God to the adequate cognition of the essence of things*, these few words give me courage to dedicate my whole life to the examination of things. . . ." Jacobi, he says elsewhere, had been punished by God with Metaphysics, he himself (Goethe) blessed with Physics.

Fifty years after his first contact with Spinoza (26th January 1825) he comes back to the same point: "Speculation, metaphysical speculation, was Jacobi's misfortune. He lacked the sciences. No man can construct a complete world-view with his few shreds of moral experience alone" (*ihn haben die Naturwissenschaften gemangelt, und mit dem bischen Moral allein lässt sich doch keine grosse Weltansicht fassen*).[1] In this brief sentence Goethe expressed the great positive lesson of Spinoza, and the date of the pronouncement is especially significant. He

[1] Quotations from Scholz, *op. cit.*, pp. cviii–cix.

is writing long after Kant had effected the unfortunate sundering of ethics from science—of the "moral law within" from the "starry heavens above"—which has had such distressing consequences for European thought down to this very day, and he declares himself unequivocally against the subjective religion of feeling and on the side of the search for God in the "individual things" of the objective world. But in order to understand the issue involved we must recall a few points of history.[1]

The years in which Spinoza's name came so suddenly to the fore in Germany were those which saw the publication of the volumes containing Kant's new system of philosophy. The first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* appeared in 1781, the year of Lessing's death; the *Prolegomena to Every Future Metaphysic* in 1783; the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* in 1786; the *Critique of Practical Reason* in 1788; the *Critique of Judgement* in 1790. The new philosophy was to sweep away all dogmatisms, and Spinoza's system was (and is still) held to be the very type of all dogmatism. Yet, instead of being swept away, the dogmatism of Spinoza actually gained ground, and that not only in the literary and artistic world but in that of philosophy too. Fichte, the great continuer of the work of Kant, was profoundly affected by it, while Kant himself was more appreciative of it at the last. Schelling was an avowed Spinozist. Hegel not only enunciated but followed the dictum that to become a philosopher one must first soak oneself in Spinoza's thought. Spinozism was not vanquished by the critical philosophy but joined forces with it.

The reason for this surprising result is to be looked for in the characteristics of the two systems. The Kantian is throughout dualistic; the Spinozistic consistently a monism. They meet on the ground of morals, but to

[1] *Cf.* an article by Dr. D. Baumgardt in the Spinoza Festheft of *Kantstudien* (xxxii, 1927, heft I): *Spinoza und der deutsche Spinozismus.*

Kant morality is struggle—man against nature; to Spinoza morality is peace and reconciliation—man within nature. Both in ethics and logic the Kantian system rests on a "twofold root," the Spinozistic on a unity. Now Philosophy is essentially unifying. It is the attempt to form one systematic view of the whole of experience. Its striving is therefore always and necessarily away from dualism in the direction of monism.

The interest in Spinoza was hence not suppressed but stimulated by the ferment aroused by Kant. The movement of thought after the erection of the great Critical system found its motive in the need to rid it of its dualism. All the great thinkers then at work were aiming, although by various means, at this same end. In Spinoza they had before them the ideal for which they strove; he offered, as it were, the antidote to Kant. Hence the attraction he exerted over them. They were fascinated by the calmly objective, systematic, character of his metaphysic in much the same way as the literary artists were fascinated by the serenity of his practical outlook. The clash between Spinoza and Kant led inevitably to the tremendous intellectual effort to absorb and develop the one in the other, which is the system of Hegel.

The story[1] of the movement from Kant to Hegel has often been told. The members of the trilogy of Self, World and Knowledge, declared by Kant to be one under the organisation of the categories, received each its special emphasis and primacy over the others, at the hands of his successors. If Fichte stressed the Self in his philosophy of ethical self-assertion and Schelling the World in his self-identical absolute of Nature, Hegel singled out Knowledge and showed that the categories are the

[1] In what follows I have used, with some modifications, the introductory paragraphs of an address on *Spinoza in Recent English Thought*, given in the Domus Spinozana on the occasion of its inauguration in February 1927 and published in *Mind*, xxxvi (N.S.), No. 142 (April, 1927).

instruments, not of interpretation by individual understanding of individual experience, but of creation by universal reason of universal experience. The ultimate science therefore is the science not of conduct nor of nature but of thought, and of thought as it 'thinks itself.' It is a trite observation that Hegel's central idea was that of the complete rationality of things. The philosophy of history is one application of the logic; the philosophy of religion another; the philosophy of nature another. But whether in history or religion or nature it is one and the same logic. Whatever view be taken of any of the vexed questions of Hegelian interpretation, one conception stands out clear: what is real is rational, and the rational is eternal. "In this conviction," he writes, "stands every plain man as well as the philosopher, and from it philosophy starts in the study both of the spiritual and of the natural universe. The great thing, however, is, in the show of the temporal and the transient, to recognise the substance which is immanent and the eternal which is present."

The problem arises: what does Hegel mean by 'rational'? What is this "substance which is immanent," this "eternal which is present"? The answer is clear. Rationality is system. "The truth is the whole." Truth is not the agreement of an object with our conception of it; it is the agreement of a thought with itself. In truth, notion and reality coincide, but such coincidence is only in the whole.

To solve the difficulties involved in this position, recognisedly Spinozistic and already clearly set out in Spinoza's early treatise *On the Improvement of the Understanding* (above p. 27), Hegel employed the equally Spinozistic device of degrees of reality. Although every finite thing involves an untruth, yet in finiteness, and hence in untruth, there are degrees. The particular is incomplete, but the less complete is not less existent; it is less real. That is to say, it is farther removed in

the logical scale from the necessarily self-existent which is the ground of all.

At the very foundation of Hegelianism, therefore, stands the Spinozistic logic. The doctrines of evil and error, of imagination and pictorial truth, of the true and false infinite, of degrees in thought and reality—all those characteristically Spinozistic theories reappear in their full force in Hegel. This is not to say that there is nothing in Hegel which is not in Spinoza, or for that matter that there is not much in Spinoza which Hegel could never have accepted: indeed, the doctrines which the two thinkers share are essentially part of the great tradition which goes back to Plato and Aristotle. The point is rather that Hegel showed with what great effect the central ideas of Spinoza could be used to heal the breach in modern thought which had been made by Kant. His own criticisms of Spinoza centre round two main points. The first is what he stigmatises as the inflexibility and deadness of the Spinozistic Substance; the second is the invalidity of the mathematical method in philosophy. Both these counts attach rather, as we have seen (above, p. 110; *cf.* 84 n.), to the form of Spinoza's thought than to its content. Spinoza's Substance is not dead mass but infinite activity, the mathematical method is an order of presentation, not a method of proof; while Hegel himself expressly identified his 'indwelling notion' with Spinoza's 'adequate idea,' and his conception of man's true freedom with Spinoza's 'intellectual love of God.' Hegel worked out his ideas in a way very foreign to Spinoza, yet their ultimate message is very close. That 'the Absolute is Spirit' is the very heart of Spinoza's philosophy, if we understand this oracle to mean, as Hegel explained it himself,[1] that "truth is only realised in the form of system."

[1] *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Vorrede, xxviii (ed. Weiss, 1908, p. 19).

III

SPINOZA'S SOURCES AND SIGNIFICANCE

SPINOZA'S great saying that the knowledge we have of a thing reflects rather our own nature than the nature of the thing, is admirably illustrated by books about him. These offer an extraordinary variety not only of stress but also of general interpretation, and it is difficult to resist the conclusion that what are exhibited as the special characteristics of Spinoza are really the special likes or dislikes of the writers. Rationalist and mystic, theologian and empirical scientist, have all seen their fellow in Spinoza, and as the waves of opinion rise and fall so yet other sides of his doctrine receive emphasis.

To the present writer it is just this fact which is significant. Spinoza's thought is not simple, it is highly complex; it is a synthesis of many and various elements. The central point of interest about him then is just their common presence in his thought and their systematic inter-connection.

The same holds good of the many exclusive sources which have been found for his doctrine. There are no exclusive sources for Spinoza. A many-sided thinker, he came of a many-sided race and lived in a many-sided age. All the historian can do is to indicate such elements in the tradition or traditions open to him which may be held to correspond with the various elements synthesised in his mind; and when we come to examine the material we find the task no easy one.

There is an old legend, crystallised in a saying of Trendelenburg, that Spinoza "thought much but read

little." This is now definitely disproved. Spinoza thought much (he meditated a long time, we are told [Lg. p. 224, l. 38], before he put pen to paper), but he read much, too. If we had any doubts on the point they would be dispelled by reference to the titles of the books sold among his effects after his death. We know that the list is not complete : the more valuable volumes were removed before the sale.[1] But even as it stands it is a proof of the widest interest in all branches of science, scholarship and literature, and over a very wide range of languages.

Further, we must remember that the century in which Spinoza lived was not one of discovery alone. It looked back as well as forward. It not only created ; it gathered up. The new science was a product of a slow development, the new philosophy a writing afresh of old ideas. It was an age, and a country, of philology and scholarship, of Scaliger, Saumaise, Heinsius, Lipsius, as well as of Descartes and Christiaan Huygens. And not only was the age an age of reading and Spinoza well-read. Curiosity extended beyond national boundaries ; there was an international communication of ideas. Nor were those days of hope obscured by specialism nor burdened with an over-nice sense of property. Men created freely and borrowed freely. Knowledge was in every sense fluid.

It is usual, in considering the main streams of which the culture of the age was the confluence (and which therefore would have been likely to affect Spinoza), to enumerate them in terms of the countries of their rise—the mathematics of France (Descartes) ; the experimental and political philosophy of England (Bacon, Hobbes) ; the pantheistic cosmologies of Italy (Telesio, Bruno, Campanella) ; the philology, theology and physics of Holland (Lipsius, Grotius, Huygens). Yet such geographical categories are manifestly inadequate. The Frenchman

[1] Schuller *ap.* Stein, *op. cit.*, p. 289. The list is given conveniently in Lg. 160–4, and replicas of most of the volumes can be handled at Rhynsburg (*cf.* above, p. 7).

Descartes lived in Holland; the Englishman Hobbes and the Italian Campanella in France; the German Oldenburg in England. Of the great philologists working at Leyden and Utrecht many were French; while a large number of famous books by non-Dutch authors (Lord Herbert's *De Religione Gentilium*[1] is a typical example) found a publisher only at Amsterdam. Father Mersenne in Paris was himself a centre of cosmopolitanism. "When I was in Paris," writes Hobbes (*De Naturis Aeris*, ed. Molesworth, Op. Lat. IV, pp. 241–2), "we used to meet together in the convent. There was no definite number of us, nor were the meetings regular; but so often as any of us found the solution of a problem we brought it for the criticism of Mersenne and the rest." In this way Mersenne's cell became the meeting place of the learned men of Europe (the informal gatherings were soon to be regularised under Royal patronage as the *Académie des Sciences*), while his voluminous correspondence brought the new ideas of students to universal notice. He himself travelled many times to Italy, and made it his special task to popularise the physical speculations of Galileo. His own original writings are an encyclopædia of earlier literature. It so happens that Spinoza's philological knowledge was very wide, and he could have read both classical and modern treatises in their originals. But if he had only the volumes of Mersenne in front of him (as a recent student believes that he had) he was in possession of the whole world of thought. It is by no means sure that Spinoza did read Mersenne, and in itself the point would seem to be neither determinable with certainty nor important. But the general fact of the wide diffusion of learning deserves emphasis and attention. By the side of the productions of the seventeenth century much of the writing of our own day is parochial.

In so intricate a labyrinth it is impossible to find a sure

[1] *Cf.* above, p. 32.

path. Only the most recent scholarship has begun even to realise the difficulties in the way of assigning sources in so apparently clear a case as Descartes. In the case of Spinoza the difficulties are precisely doubled. As we noted in the account of his life, he is more than the product of seventeenth-century Holland. He is the full fruit of an age-old Hebraism too. And here we are in a vast field of enormous possibilities. There is not only the ancient literature to consider—and who can say what influence the Bible itself had on Spinoza?—but the mediæval writing (either original, or in Hebrew through translation) which covers all branches of human interest and inquiry. Further, the Jewry of Amsterdam in which Spinoza was educated contained men who had not only learned but taught in the universities of Spain, while just before his birth one of its leading men was a graduate of Padua who had studied mathematics at the lectures of Galileo. We know that Spinoza possessed his writings —they are Nos. 56 and (probably) 57 in the library list—and if only through them he would have had revealed to him the whole mixed world of Christian, Arabic and Jewish scholasticism, together with much Hebrew and classical philology, Averroist theology, contemporary mathematics (particularly optics), and general Renaissance philosophy. True, Del Medigo did not have a great or a clear mind, and one is far from thinking of his work as being an element in the formation of Spinoza's; but he is symptomatic, and this is the main point, of the age in which Spinoza was brought up, an age which both within and without the Synagogue was one of learning and syncretism (see *Chron. Spin.* II. pp. 54–66).

When, therefore, the latest student of Spinoza's *Short Treatise* points out that it offers striking analogies with the work of Abailard (who had been taken by Budæus in 1701 already as an example of a 'Spinozist before Spinoza'), there is no convincing reason why there should

not have been a direct borrowing on the part of Spinoza. Certain of Abailard's works were published for the first time in Paris in 1616, and Spinoza's attention may well have been drawn to them by references in Mersenne. The *Short Treatise* has also been held to be directly dependent on the theories of Giordano Bruno, the similarity of whose metaphysical doctrine with that of Spinoza had already been remarked by Bayle. If it could be proved, as it would not seem to have been yet, that what Spinoza has to say was said before him by Bruno and by Bruno alone, then we should have to consider the hypothesis as extremely likely. The same holds with regard to other of the works of the Renaissance Italians. Dilthey, in his fascinating and comprehensive *Weltanschauung und Analyse des Menschen seit Renaissance und Reformation* (*Ges. Schrift.*, II, Leipzig, 1921), pointed out how the Stoic theory of life, which in many respects is recalled by that of Spinoza, was revived not only by the philologists of Holland, but also by Telesio in Italy, and that Telesio's queer mixture of mysticism and science contains hints of other portions of Spinoza's doctrine. It must be confessed that Dilthey's erudition often seems to overreach itself, but the possibility remains a possibility. Very much more can be said on behalf of the *Dialogues on Love* of another Italian writer, Leon Abrabanel, a book which Spinoza actually possessed in a Spanish translation. In it we hear of a cosmic love which binds together the whole universe, and in one memorable passage of the 'intellectual love' which binds man to God.[1]

[1] For Leon Abrabanel see now Gebhardt's edition of the *Dialoghi di Amore* in the *Bibliotheca Spinozana* (Heidelberg and Oxford, 1928); and the studies of Joaquim de Carvalho (*Leão Hebreu, Filósofo*, Coimbra, 1918) and Heinz Pflaum (*Die Idee der Liebe: Leone Ebreo, zwei Abhandlungen zur Geschichte der Philosophie in der Renaissance*, Tübingen, 1926). Mr. Thomas Whittaker has pointed out to me that the saying of Spinoza with which the present chapter begins is to be found in the *Dialoghi* (III, 72a): "La cosa conosciuta sta, & s'imprime nel conoscente secondo il modo & natura di esso conoscente, & non del conosciuto" (extracts published by Gebhardt in *Chron. Spin.* I, p. 251, § 83).

Leon Abrabanel was not only an Italian. He was 'Leone *Ebreo*' (Leon the Hebrew), last in the long line of mediæval Jewish thinkers, and we may turn to a brief consideration of them. We must not think of these philosophers as remote from the current of ordinary Jewish life. They were the pride of the cultural tradition, and their works were both standard and favourite, besides being short and easily accessible. That they came into Spinoza's hands is clear both from the facts of his early training and also from his many incidental references. Few of his doctrines are without analogy in their writings. The Ibn Ezra he quotes so frequently in the *Theological-Political Treatise* was an avowed pantheist who interpreted the Scriptural 'cleaving' of man to God as the union of part with whole. Gersonides was a hardened Averroist and accepted the doctrines of the eternity of matter and the unity of soul; he pointed out also explicitly in a notable passage the non-teleological character of mathematical propositions. Crescas, the 'Rab Ghasdaj' of Ep. 12, was not only a thorough-going determinist; he hinted that the old saying that 'God is the place of the world' should be taken seriously, and saw as the final end of man his union with God through Love. The greatest of them all, Maimonides, fixed the area of discussion for all who came after, and formed so integral a part of Spinoza's mental world that his views were made the storm-centre of the *Theological-Political Treatise*. I have shown elsewhere[1] what Spinoza found in him. The reasoned attacks on anthropomorphism, the insistence that a sound ethics is impossible without psychology on the one hand and physical science on the other, the making of the idea of God the foundation

[1] *Spinoza, Descartes, and Maimonides* (Oxford, 1924). For a contrary view see Professor Tj. de Boer's criticism in a paper *Maimonides en Spinoza* read before the Dutch Royal Academy of Sciences, and printed in their Proceedings (Department of Literature and Philosophy, vol. 63, No. 2, 1927).

of scientific inquiry, the definite and extreme nominalism, the rejection of final causes, the theory of imagination and error—these and many other ideas afterwards to be woven into the fabric of Spinozism appear with the utmost clearness and terseness in Maimonides. From monotheism to monism is not so great a step if the monotheism be philosophical and the monism theological; and if the philosophy and the theology are based on a veneration of positive scientific knowledge, the final barriers between them tend to disappear. We shall return to this point later. Before plunging into the wider inquiry, however, it may be well to note some unquestionable cases of specific influence.

There is no doubt that Spinoza used the handbooks of contemporary logicians. He mentions them by name, possessed their writings, and used their classifications. They are, therefore, in a very real sense, to be accounted among his sources. Yet, indubitable as this fact is, the *Ethics* is much more than the text-books of Burgersdyck or Heereboord. They provided some of its technical language, but all that this means is that Spinoza, like anybody else, had to use the language of his time.

There is no doubt that Spinoza made use of, and was very much impressed by, Hobbes. He mentions him more than once, possessed his *De Cive* in the Amsterdam edition, built on his theory of law and society. Yet, as he is careful to point out himself (Ep. 50, first §; Th.P. Annot. XXXIII), his theory of politics is certainly not that of Hobbes. He gave to Hobbes' principles a turn which led not to the Leviathan but to a conception of democracy akin to that which was to become famous in the writings of Rousseau (see above, p. 138). Hobbes, like Heereboord, provided the material, but the final system is Spinoza's own.

There is no doubt that Spinoza used Bacon and passed through what was practically a Baconian phase. He

mentions him very often; possessed at least one of his books—only the *Essays* (*Sermones Fideles*), it is true—and makes frequent use of his phraseology, even as late as the *Theological-Political Treatise*. But the point of interest is that in the very work *On the Improvement of the Understanding* in which Bacon's influence has been detected most decisively,[1] Spinoza definitely took up the opposite side to him on the all-important issue between deduction and induction. Indeed, our first insight into his mind, in the early correspondence with Oldenburg (Ep. 2, p. 8; Ep. 13, p. 67), shows him definitely an independent critic of Bacon.

We may now take an example of a different sort of influence altogether. The place of the Neo-Platonic tradition in European thought has only lately been appreciated to its full extent. The middle ages were far from being completely Aristotelian (indeed the mediæval Aristotle was largely Platonic), and the revolt against Aristotle which heralded modern thought took the form largely of a return to Plato. There is a strong Platonic strain in Descartes, principally in his theory of knowledge, and although Spinoza was cast in a more Aristotelian mould, his system also shows profound traces of a similar influence. The most striking instance is that of the machinery he uses to bring together *natura naturans* with *natura naturata*. The whole doctrine of the grades of modes, infinite and finite, recalls strongly, in phraseology at least,[2] the Neo-Platonic theory of emanation. Exactly through what channels it came to Spinoza we shall probably never know. It may have been through Bruno, although no evidence has ever been produced that Spinoza made a study of him. It may have been through the Hebrew Cabbalists, who are through and through Neo-Platonic, although they contain elements from other sources as well. It may have

[1] See Gebhardt's *Spinoza's Abhandlung über die Verbesserung des Verstandes*, Heidelberg, 1905.

[2] *Cf.* above, p. 80.

been through Philo himself, the study of whom had been brought into Jewish circles a century before, and whose views on certain points of history are quoted, though almost certainly at second hand, in the *Theological-Political Treatise* (c. 10, pp. 127 and 132). It may well have been just one of the common ideas of the day, part of what we have learned from Mr. Whitehead to call the 'intellectual climate' of the age. We do not know. The important thing is, however, to realise that these factors are there and give a definite bias to the system.

It is at least clear that Spinoza was the child of his time and made a free use of what he found in front of him. But did he ever belong to a 'school' of thought? Is there any one thinker or group of thinkers of whom he was a specific disciple?

This question is often answered in the affirmative. He was a disciple, it is often said, of Descartes.

Now if by a disciple is meant a man who whole-heartedly gives himself up to the views of a 'master,' then it is clear, and is now generally recognised, that Spinoza was never a disciple of Descartes in the full sense. On the other hand, Descartes was pre-eminently the philosopher of the age, and nobody writing after him could have escaped his influence. The problem, therefore, remains of the nature and extent of the influence which he exerted on Spinoza.

Two sorts of answers are usually offered, both leading to the same general conclusion. It has been maintained (by those who approve of Spinoza) that the Cartesian philosophy was, in intention, what Spinoza's was in fact, but that, for various reasons, among which is to be reckoned a speculative (and perhaps a moral) weakness in Descartes, it never succeeded in working itself out completely in him and only found its full development in Spinoza. Or it is said (this by those who disapprove of

Spinoza) that Cartesianism contained certain unlucky elements which Descartes was too sane to follow up, but which Spinoza pursued to their unfortunate end. On either of these views Spinoza's philosophy is accounted as the completion, logical or illogical, of Cartesianism.

This conclusion the present writer holds to be definitely wrong. He believes that Cartesianism, both in intention and in fact, was fundamentally pluralistic. Further, he thinks that this view of the Cartesian philosophy is that which can be shown to have been held by Spinoza himself. The evidence for this opinion will be found fully elsewhere,[1] and as it concerns the interpretation not of Spinoza but of Descartes, need not be discussed in this place; though it should be remarked that, in essence, it is already set out in the Preface to Spinoza's *Principles of Descartes' Philosophy*, written by L. Meyer and revised by Spinoza himself.[2] To maintain, however, that Spinoza's philosophy is not the logical outcome of Cartesianism is not, of course, to assert that Spinoza learned nothing from Descartes. He learned much, and that of the highest importance. Descartes was the embodiment of the positive science of the age, and it was this, and nothing less than this, that he signified for the youthful Spinoza.

The main debt which Spinoza owed to Descartes was that of the *content* of his thought, the actual concrete knowledge upon which he brought his mind to bear. But the *form* of his thought, the impress he brought to the content, he derived from elsewhere, and we have seen earlier how unsparing a critic it made him of some of Descartes' fundamental principles (above, pp. 110 f., 196 ff.). His earliest works, the *Short Treatise* and the fragment *On the Improvement of the Understanding*, show him using Cartesian material for his own purposes, while

[1] *Op. cit.*, cap. I; *Spinoza and Cartesianism, Mind*, xxxii, No. 125 (1923), p. 12 ff.

[2] See above, p. 17.

the very first of his letters which we possess contains a critical and entirely independent account both of Bacon and of Descartes from the point of view of the philosophical position to which he adhered to the very end. Spinoza would seem to have *come to* the study of the great modern thinkers with a developed philosophy of his own. Any profitable account of his sources will rest, therefore, on a (necessarily hypothetical) reconstruction of his early life.

This has been undertaken by Father Stanislaus von Dunin-Borkowski in *Der Junge de Spinoza* (Munster, i.W., 1910 ; *cf.* above, p. 70). This encyclopædic volume is a quarry from which any student of the seventeenth century can learn much, and although some of its points are open to question, it will remain a unique and fruitful collection of material. Its principal result is to demonstrate that there is not a single one of Spinoza's doctrines which cannot be traced in works open to him while he was still a youth, and that all his later reading could do was further to develop ideas which, in principle, he had absorbed long before. The detail of Dunin-Borkowski's reconstruction need not detain us. In what I have to say I have followed my own. But the main point, which agrees fully with the results of investigators who have attacked the problem from different angles altogether,[1] may be regarded as established. Spinoza's starting point is not a development from Cartesianism, nor was it adopted in revulsion from Cartesianism. It is that in the light of which he was enabled to see, and to accept or reject, the tendencies of that doctrine. Spinoza brought it to, he was not led to it by, his study of the Cartesian philosophy.

[1] *E.g.* V. Delbos (*La Notion de Substance et la Notion de Dieu dans la philosophie de Spinoza, Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, November 1908, and *Le Spinozisme*, Paris, 1916, pp. 18–19 and 30 f.) ; Freudenthal (*Leben und Lehre Spinozas*, Heidelberg and Oxford, part II, pp. 91–2) ; and Pollock (*Spinoza*, 1912, pp. 83 f., 112–3).

The question of the sources of Spinoza now assumes a different aspect. The issue is not that of a choice between subsidiary elements of reading. Such subsidiary sources are to be looked for in all the available literature of the time, and the greater the number of similarities and parallels which are identified, the more we shall understand the complex intellectual atmosphere in which he lived and breathed. But even if we had a complete index of the subjects and phraseology of every previous writer, we should still be far from penetrating into Spinoza's mind. The system *starts* as a monism,[1] and as a monism of a very peculiar sort. Any amount of material came to Spinoza, but it was received and treated in a special fashion. The mind to which it came was already formed. The fundamental question to be met, therefore, is, under what influences was this structural characteristic produced ?

We may go back to our earlier chapter on Spinoza's general outlook. We saw that its primary peculiarities were its ethical orientation on the one hand and its scientific interest on the other. His ethics is made to rest on physics, the science of man on the knowledge of nature ; but nature is equated with God, and so morality, together with science, finds its end in religion. Conduct, nature, science, love, God—these are the primary ideas. The highest conduct is that associated with the highest knowledge which is the grasp of nature in its wholeness, and the grasp of nature in its wholeness is that which stirs the mind to the love of God. The love of God is the master-emotion which controls and directs all others ; yet it is a love which is not the product of a mystical dream but of the most positive study of physical fact. This integral fusion of the most positive science with the most earnest

[1] " Die Struktur des Systems ist also von vornherein ein Monismus. . . . Alles, was er las, wandelte sich ihm sofort in Stoff zur Ausgestaltung dieser Grundanlage des Systems. . . ." Dilthey : *Gesammelte Schriften*, II (1921), p. 443.

moral striving and the most exalted religious feeling is the fundamental character of Spinoza, and it persisted as the supreme principle which controlled his philosophy from the very first to the very last.

Now we can point to one factor in his early training which is marked by precisely the same characteristic.

The mediæval Jewish philosophers, and especially Maimonides, had given a peculiar turn to the monotheism of the Bible.[1] In the Hebrew Bible God is conceived of as being not only the sole but also the immediate cause of each single thing or event. It is true that he alone can perform miracles, and that his greatest miracle is the establishing of order in the world. Within the world itself, however, there is little idea of reciprocal interaction. Traces of the appearance of this view may be seen in those passages in which the operation of secondary causes is emphasised—the lifting up of the sea through a strong wind; the feeding of Elijah by the agency of ravens; the sheltering of Jonah by means of a gourd. Still, such passages are few and probably not representative. Biblical writers are so full of the majesty of God that in each single phenomenon they see the immediate consequence of a particular act of his will.

When one considers the character of scientific inquiry, however, it is clear that this simple doctrine fails to satisfy. Chance has been banished from the world and in its place the wisdom of God has been enthroned. But unless the acts of God's wisdom, constituting nature, are such as we can understand, we can never penetrate into the heart of things. The interpretability of nature depends on its being one whole, any part of which theoretically is explicable in terms of the rest. This great development of the implications of monotheism was clearly enunciated

[1] In what follows I have used some paragraphs from an essay on *Jewish Thought in the Modern World*, which forms part of the *Legacy of Israel*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1927.

by the mediæval Jewish thinkers, particularly Maimonides. The Bible had declared that the whole of nature had one Creator. They added the corollary that created nature is one.

To the recognition of the ethical weakness of polytheism is thus explicitly added the recognition of the logical. Polytheism is seen to involve a chaos in science as well as in morals; or rather, it is seen to preclude the very possibility of science, as formerly it had been seen to preclude the very possibility of morality. If there is no unity of control in nature there is no standard of conduct. If there is no unity of structure in nature there is no such thing as ordered knowledge. The establishing of this position is the central point of the argument of the masterpiece of the whole movement, Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed*. The clarity with which it is seized is remarkable. God is a 'free cause,' but a rational one; and his rationality is manifested in the homogeneity of his creation.

The point is so important as to merit the closest attention. The world is treated as one individual whole, and it is one because the God who made it is one. The position achieved is not a monism, since it insists on a transcendent Creator; but it has come to the doctrine of the unity and harmony of the structure of things from a sense of the unity of their source. Hebraic monotheism is not originally a scientific theory, arising, as among the Greek philosophers, from the contemplation of the unitary character of natural phenomena; rather the unitary character of natural phenomena is a deduction from the primary intuition of religion. But, the result once arrived at, the religious theory proved much more thorough-going than the scientific. Greek metaphysics never threw off the polytheistic taint. Both Plato and Aristotle believed in the existence of a real contingency in nature. Such a doctrine, however, is inconceivable to a philosophy arising out of

monotheism. The ideal of absolute cosmic regularity is of religious origin. Laws of nature are originally, as they in fact appear in Spinoza (*cf.* above, p. 62 f.), the immutable decrees of God. Monotheism can have no more dealings with 'errant causes,' 'chance' or 'fortuitousness' in science, than with a host of co-ordinate controls in morals. And its emotional appeal is immeasurably more powerful than that of any contemplative analysis. To the religious mind, even when turned towards science, the spirit of God still moves upon the face of the waters.

By the transference of emphasis from the unity of God to the unity of nature, scientific inquiry, the inquiry into the uniformities of the structure of things, was raised by the mediæval Jewish thinkers into the supreme religious duty. "*Know* the God of thy father," they would quote (I. *Chronicles* xxviii, 9), and by the "knowledge of God" they meant the study of the facts of the created world. Search after truth in the sciences was even declared to be a high and essential step in the grades of wisdom culminating in the illumination of the prophet. Spinoza's doctrine of *scientia intuitiva* follows closely on Maimonides' account of prophecy: like *scientia intuitiva* prophecy is an intuitive insight into individual essence. But whether it was historically dependent on it or not is of little consequence in comparison with the central point. The bold setting of science in the very shrine of religion is what we have learned to recognise as the primary lesson of Spinoza. We now see whence it was derived. It came from his early and continued study (of which the *Theological-Political Treatise* itself is abundant proof) of mediæval Jewish philosophy.

Now Spinoza was not only, nor even primarily, interested in external nature and the physical sciences. His interest in nature and science was indeed, as we have seen, in some sort, incidental. His primary concern was with man and human conduct, and it was in search of a way

of life that he set out on the path of science. The way that he found has been the subject of our discussion hitherto. We must ask now how it came about that Spinoza felt the urgency of the problem of conduct so strongly that he made it the centre and circumference of his thinking.

When Descartes set out, in his *Discourse on Method*, to give a history of his mental development, he began with an account of his early impulse towards scientific research, and with an estimate, from the point of view of scientific discovery, of the various disciplines of the schools. He notes his " good fortune from his youth up " in that he had " found a way whereby his knowledge could be indefinitely increased," and he testifies to the " extreme satisfaction " he had gained from the contemplation of his continuous intellectual progress. If we set against this confession of the typical man of science Spinoza's record of his first meditations on the problems of life (above, p. 41 f.), the point of contrast is unmistakable. The two men are in outlook poles apart. The keynote of Descartes is intellectual curiosity, that of Spinoza moral passion. It is true that Descartes wrote incidentally on morals, as did Spinoza incidentally on science. But the cleavage persists throughout. Descartes' ultimate interest was in the ' true ' ; Spinoza's, in the ' good.'

The difference has often been noted, and the source of it, too, has been long recognised : Spinoza's interest in morals comes to him by inheritance. He is a descendant of a people which, from the earliest times, had cared little for abstract theories, everything for practical conduct ; he is the product of a literature dominated by the ideal of righteousness, of a history which is one long appeal for justice. In spite of himself, and in spite of the Amsterdam community, he remained in his innermost being a son of the People of the Book.

We may now retrace our steps.

The problem with which Spinoza starts, the problem of conduct, is the old Biblical search for the " path of life " ; the intellectual worship in which he found its solution, for which the emotion which is religion springs from the knowledge which is science, is the creation of mediæval Jewish philosophy. Thus shaped, Spinoza entered the world of modern thought. From Descartes he absorbed the positive content of the new knowledge ; from Hobbes, the impetus to a naturalistic politics ; from Bacon, a sense of the importance of experiment in the work of investigation; from contemporary logicians the terminology which had been hammered out by centuries of scholasticism. He took what he could whence he could, yet he adhered to his original vision. The matter is new. The form is old.

The general conclusion we have reached, far from being paradoxical, is suggested by the facts of Spinoza's own life. It is indeed the story, when understood, of the earliest account of it which has come down to us (above, p. 2) : " The Author received his early training in literature and as a youth spent many years in the study of theology ; but when he came to maturity he gave himself up entirely to philosophy . . . finding great assistance in the writings of Descartes." We have only to understand that the 'literature' and 'theology' of his early training were, as would be expected, the literature and theology of the community in which he was educated, and we have in this passage from the editorial introduction to the *Opera Posthuma* the essential points of the position set out in the previous discussion. The truth of the matter is thus in its broad outline essentially simple, and it explains naturally the main tendencies of Spinoza's philosophy. Brought up in the most intense and ethical of religions, Spinoza passed his life in a great age of science. It is hence not extraordinary that his thought should represent the blending of the ideals of the one with those of the other.

Now this account, which is in full accord both with Spinoza's personal history and the general character of his work, is the key not only to the problem of his sources. It goes far to explain the significance of his greater life within the history of thought and of his influence upon subsequent generations.

Mr. Bridges has published an anthology[1] in which *The Spirit of Man* gives an account of itself through the mouths of great writers. At the head of it he has set the autobiographical passage from Spinoza's treatise *On the Improvement of the Understanding*. The choice was happy, and the fact significant. Systems of philosophy are not parasitic growths on the tree of life; they are its fullest fruit. And as the fruit is the concentration of the essence of the tree, so philosophy represents, in however imperfect a manner, the deepest tendencies of the age which produced it. What are the deepest tendencies of the modern age? They are not difficult to detect. They centre round that very continuity between science and religion which is the mainspring of Spinoza's thought. Spinoza is thus the typical thinker of the new age. His doubts and strivings are ours.

Like Spinoza the modern mind began with faith. Like Spinoza it set that faith in science. Like Spinoza it has had its emancipations and excommunications, and in the midst of unrest and disquiet yearns for peace. Philosophy for us, as for Spinoza, is not a luxury, a mere intellectual accomplishment. It is a necessity, the greatest of necessities; it is life thinking for life. We, too, are "in the midst of very great perils," and are "forced to seek a remedy, however uncertain; like a sick man suffering from a mortal disease, who, with certain death in front of him if a remedy be not found, is forced to seek it, however uncertain, because in it alone is his sole hope." It is our experience, too, that "the remedies usually followed not only fail to restore health but even impede

[1] London; Longmans, Green & Co., 1916.

it, and are frequently the cause of the death of those who possess them and always the cause of the death of those who are possessed by them. . . ." (D.I.E. p. 358).

Whether Spinoza's ideas will be of service in the reconstruction of thought which is bound to result from the present ferment is a matter which only the future can show.[1] It is certain that many of its crude and crippling oppositions are overcome by the help of his principles. Materialism and Idealism, Rationalism and Mysticism, Humanism and Naturalism, Egoism and Altruism—all these and many other similar issues find their 'reconciliation' in the 'full roundness' of Spinoza's philosophy. By this is not meant, as Professor Wolf remarks in an essay from which these phrases were taken,[2] that it is an 'eclectic patchwork,' a 'mere compromise between opposite views.' It is a completely individual and self-consistent account of reality which brings opposite views together by reason of its breadth of outlook. Its great characteristic is truth to fact and it has much to offer to all schools of interpretation. It is big enough to be a 'meeting-place of extremes.'[3]

It is for this reason that there are few disciples of Spinoza in the narrow sense of the term, men pledged to the doctrine of a master. Yet the number of those who draw, and draw deeply, from the well of his patient thought is steadily on the increase. Whatever view be taken of Spinoza's system, whether we dismiss it as a phantasy, shrink from it as a nightmare, embrace it as a revelation from on high, the spectacle it offers of a 'meditation' which is 'not of death but of life' will never cease to inspire. From it will always be seen "how great is the

[1] For an appreciation of Spinoza from the point of view of modern problems see S. Alexander: *Lessons from Spinoza* (*Chron. Spin.* V); and *cf.* C. Lloyd Morgan: *Life, Mind and Spirit* (London, Williams and Norgate, 1926), cap. I., § 5 ('Back to Spinoza?').

[2] *Spinoza the Conciliator* (*Chron. Spin.* II).

[3] See some remarks of the present writer on Bosanquet's book of that name in *Mind*, April 1927, p. 209 f.

strength of the wise man, and how far he surpasses the ignorant, who is driven forward by mere desire. For the ignorant man is not only distracted by external causes in many ways and never enjoys true inner peace, but he lives also without understanding his own self and God and things, and as soon as he ceases to suffer ceases also to be; whereas the wise man, considered as such, is scarcely ever troubled in mind, but, being conscious by a certain eternal necessity of himself, of God, and of things, never ceases to be and always enjoys true inner peace.

"If the way which I have shown to lead hither seems very difficult, it can nevertheless be found. It must indeed be difficult since it is so seldom discovered. For if salvation lay ready to hand and could be discovered without great labour, how could it come about that it should be neglected almost by all?

"But every excellent thing is as difficult as it is rare—*Omnia præclara tam difficilia quam rara sunt.*" [1]

[1] *Ethics* V, concluding passage.

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